

LONDON^{THE} READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1418.—VOL. LV.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 5, 1890.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["DON'T LOOK AT ME, PLEASE, MR. LEICESTER," HOPE SAID, "I AM A MASS OF MUD!"]

HER MISTAKE.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was early February now. More than a week had gone since that day Dr. Gunter and Hope had exchanged a sort of laughing quarrel in Philip's room, and still the invalid had not progressed enough to satisfy Sir William, and be conveyed downstairs. The fireglow lit the room as Hope, in obedience to Philip's voice, opened the door.

"It's only me, Mr. Leicester. May I come in?"

His answer was to rise from the chair and move towards her, one hand outstretched, while the other was still strapped across his breast. Hope hastened to him.

"How naughty you are! What do you mean by walking about in this way, when you can only just stand?"

Philip tried to say something, but his limbs were trembling under him, and his head swam. He was only conscious that two small, yet not weakly, hands were guiding him back to his

chair, and that he was pushed into its soft depths again before he had time to think.

"I really must scold you," Hope said lightly. She felt quite grieved to see how white and gaunt he looked now he was up and dressed in clothes that seemed to hang on him. "I shall not come and see you again if you will be so naughty, Mr. Leicester."

"I don't think I did anything very much, Miss Carruthers," Philip said, his weakness of voice condemning him. "I—I forgot I was of so little use, and I was so glad to see you."

Hope smiled, and yet felt the reproach come into her heart again. It was selfish to have forgotten him in the midst of her own happiness, she said to herself.

"I have not known you seven years, but I am going to poke your fire," she said brightly; and forthwith she knelt down on the hearth-rug, tossing her gloves and hunting-crop down beside her, and pulling off her low hat.

"Don't look at me, please, Mr. Leicester," she said, as she stirred the coals into a blaze.

"I am literally a mass of mud from head to foot. We had such a run, and the country is so heavy."

"And you must be tired!" Philip said, shielding his eyes with his hand, and gasping his fill on her lovely face—doubly lovely with the radiance of happiness fall on it. Her red-brown hair was roughened and blown into disorder, and the wind had kissed her cheeks into the sweetest roses.

He did not know until now, as he sat looking at her, what a blank the last two days had been without her. He pulled the rug about his knees suddenly, nervously; and as he did so, a ring fell from his thin finger and rolled on the hearth-rug close to where Hope sat crouched up quite cozily, watching the fire burn and blaze.

"Oh! your ring, Mr. Leicester!" she exclaimed, as she picked it up. "I have often looked at and admired it from a distance. Dr. Gunter tells me you tried to get it off and could not move it. I am afraid this means that you are grown much thinner. May I look at it?"

"Surely," Philip said quickly. "It is the first time it has been off my finger for nearly eighteen years, but it has grown much looser lately, or, as you say, I have grown thinner."

There was a time when nothing short of cutting off my finger would move it. It has little value, but I treasure it for the sake of old companionship and old remembrances."

"I like it," Hope said, turning the curious gold circlet round in her little fingers. It was formed into a rough sort of shield, and there were armorial bearings engraven on this.

Inside the ring there was something further engraven, but Hope did not, of course, seek to read what it might be.

"It is so quaint and old-fashioned," she continued. "I am sure you must be fond of it. I love all sorts of treasures like this, treasures that have no value for any one save oneself," and then, as she handed the ring back to him, Hope blushed. "I daresay you notice," she said, shyly, "that I have not got my ring on to-day. I always take it off when I ride, for it hurts me under the glove and reins, but I would not go without it for anything so—please don't laugh at me, Mr. Leicester—I tie it round my neck under my habit." She pulled up a silken cord as she spoke, and the ring hung down over her scarlet hunting waistcoat, emitting sparks and gleams of dancing light as the fire caught the diamonds in it. "Girls are always sentimental, aren't they, Mr. Leicester?"

"Other people too, I think, Miss Carruthers," Philip answered, quietly.

It gave him a sort of pain the sight of that glittering, flashing ring dangling from her pretty throat.

"After all," he said, with a little catch in his breath, "what would life be like without sentiment—a very cold and barren thing!"

Hope carried her ring unconsciously to her smiling lips, her eyes fixed dreamily on the fire; then she woke from her dream as a clock chimed the half-hour, and scrambled to her feet, picking up her hat, gloves, and crop.

"I must go, Mr. Leicester. This is only a flying visit; but to-morrow," with the faintest quiver on her lips, for it was hard to lose Hugh again so soon, "we will continue our reading if you like. I am quite anxious to know what happened to Letty, aren't you?"

Letty was the heroine in the novel they had commenced.

Philip took her little hand in his long, thin one.

"It was good of you to think of me in the midst of your happiness," he said. Then tenderly, quickly, "And you are happy, child, are you not?"

Hope smiled back into his eyes.

"So happy! I never knew what the word meant till now!" she said, softly, and then she had gathered her habit about her and had flitted from the room, leaving Philip to sit and gaze into the fire, his ring clamped in his hand.

"Pray Heaven she may say that always," was his fervent thought, and then he shivered. Was it a premonition of evil to come in the future? Was it a momentary vision that showed him the girl's face white, and anguished tears blurring the beauty of the violet eyes?

He did not know, but the shiver, though it came unconsciously, was none the less real, and his bitter knowledge and experience of life was only too ready to palat in gloomy shadows and sad forebodings.

Had not he once started as full of hope and joyousness as this girl? Had not he tasted the sweets of youthful happiness? Had not he been as eager, as confident, as glad as Hope? And yet what had been the result?

At thirty-three he was a sombre-browed man, feeling no sunshine even when the sun shone, weary of existence, destitute of friends, of love, sympathy, or any of the sweet blossoms that are to be found studding even the dreariest and dustiest hedge on a roadside of life, if the eyes be not blinded to their perfume and their delicacy.

Philip had lived in such a rough, wild world these past years he had grown to think such flowers were never born—at least, for him.

The sympathy, the affectionate care and interest that had been lavished on him since his illness at Thickethorn had caused him many a pang of shame. Over this he had taken himself to task as he lay alone on his sick bed.

Maybe, had he not grieved himself about with that armour of cynicism, of mistrust, of doubt, these blessings would have come to him, even in his wildest life.

Looking back on his chequered career he realised, with something like pain, that by his own hand he had made his life harder than it could have been. The bitterness that a great wrong done him in his boyhood had planted in his naturally tender, generous heart had grown and grown until it had formed itself into a barrier against which all that was good and gentle and sweet might press and press in vain.

He moved restlessly in his chair as he sat alone, and his hand closed and unclosed nervously on his ring.

Even now that the barrier had been beaten down, and a path laid clear to his better nature, he was uncertain as to whether he felt glad or sorry.

Habit—the habit of years—becomes in itself a second nature, and of a surety this was true of Philip Leicester. He could not altogether forget the creed he had been practicing all these years, and there was almost an impatient annoyance with himself in that he should have laid it aside for a moment, yielding to the magnetic power of a girl, who in a little while would be passed out of his life, probably for ever.

"What has come to me?" he muttered to himself, wearily. "What is it to me whether there is a joy or sorrow for her in the future? It has not been my *metier* to trouble my head over these problems hitherto, and women's lives have not presented much interest to me up till now."

Indeed, an uneasy qualm came over him as he remembered the one or two women who had sought sympathy from him, wooed into tenderness by his handsome face and charm of manner, only to fall back repulsed and hurt by his absolute indifference.

He had no liking for women. "They are false, mean, cruel," he would say to himself, and he shut his eyes resolutely to all that was good and beautiful in the weaker sex.

Lovers he had bestowed upon him more than he could count, and sometimes he had stopped to lose himself in the sunshine of lovely eyes and the fascinations attached to them.

His stay was but momentary—a temporary weakness, natural to a man of his nature, living the rough, reckless life he lived; and there would follow on these episodes a hatred for himself, a contempt and loathing for the companions of his folly, and he would fall again into his old brooding condition.

With all his follies and his sins—for what man is without sin?—Philip Leicester was free of one crime. He had wronged no woman. Evil as he thought them, poor, feeble, treacherous as they were in his eyes, his soul was not stained with the crime of having brought ruin or shame on any living creature; and there had been many moments, indeed, when a woman had received protection and chivalrous care from his hands; for though he despised the sex he could see harm done to no one, and was ever ready to give his stalwart strength in defence of the weak.

He had been armed against all feminine influence by the cynicism and contempt in his heart. Never until now had he even stopped to review his past, or to confess to himself that the life he had led had been desolate and unsatisfactory, as much through his own doing as through an adverse fate.

But this illness following on his accident had worked a change in the man; and though he would not allow it, yet he knew that the gentle sympathy and womanliness of Hope Carruthers had been the principal factor in working this change.

The sweetness of her nature, her refined, pure thoughts, expressed in the pleasant chats they had had together, her beautiful belief in all things good, her reverence for and happy confidence in the being who had granted her life; all had woven a charm to beat down the barrier that distrust, apathy, and bitterness had raised up, and had given him a glimpse of possible existence which, even in imagination, made his heart thrill and his pulses beat.

Unconsciously he had yielded to this influence. He had let his prejudices go down one by one. He had permitted the promptings of his natural disposition to respond to Hope's innocent and unconscious teaching; and as he sat now alone, gazing into the fire, he made free confession to himself, as many a man had done before him, and thousands who would follow him would do likewise, that his life—reckless, cynical, pessimistic, unsatisfactory—had been nothing more nor less than a great mistake, and there rose all at once within him a desire to blot it all out, to put aside the old follies, the old feelings, and begin anew.

"It would be something to know that she would say I was doing right," he said to himself, and then he unlocked his hand, and looked down at the ring lying on his thin, white palm. "Would she condemn me utterly if she had known all?" he thought; "if the story of my shame, the cruel wrong spoken by one who should have remembered my youth and spared me for that, if a father's affection was dead within him? No—no. She would have pitied me, not condemned, for she would have understood. I have been blind all these years. There is that within the heart and nature of a pure true woman which no words can describe—which is above and beyond all our vaunted strength, our so-called wisdom. She would have understood, and she would have grieved for me. How she would have grieved!"

He was still gazing at the ring he held. Suddenly he leant forward, and put it on the table beside him.

"I will never wear you again. You have been with me through all that long mistake—a silent adviser to become more reckless and embittered as the years past. I will give you another. She has a fancy for you, and it is but little I can do to express my unspeakable gratitude and remembrance of the friendship I have received. To-morrow, old ring, you and I will part company. Pray Heaven it may be the beginning of a better life for me—for her a continuance of the happiness that is her due!"

CHAPTER IX.

The violets were peeping in fragrant profusion from every nook and corner of Thickethorn Woods when Philip Leicester was pronounced sufficiently strong enough by Dr. Gunter to undertake a journey to London. His recovery had been rapid towards the end, and he looked very handsome, if somewhat pale and worn, as he stood in his thick ulster, and clasped hands with Sir William in the quaint old hall.

"Hope will be so sorry to miss you! She returns home now in a few days," Sir William said, as he tried in vain to persuade Philip to postpone his journey and take up his abode again at Thickethorn for an indefinite period; and then the cheery old sportsman sighed. "She won't be home for long either, my little fairy. The wedding is fixed for the middle of this month. It will be a bad day for me when I lose my little girl, though, please Heaven, she's not likely to come to any harm. She's made a good choice, I hope, and she loves him as much as she loves her. That's all right to begin with, anyhow, isn't it?"

"I am very sorry not to see Miss Carruthers once more before I leave. I should have liked to have tried once again to thank her for all her great kindness to me, but—it is not easy to thank any one," Philip added hurriedly, "when the debt is so heavy."

Sir William wrung the young man's hand again and again.

"Don't talk of debt, but just try and pick yourself up a bit; and whenever you feel you want a mouthful of fresh air, throw a handful of clothes together, and come and stay here as long as you like. There will always be something for you to ride or drive, and if you've got a horse I fancy you will be all right. You'll send us a line now and then to say how you are; and remember the child's wedding on the sixteenth. It will be a quiet affair—no bridesmaids or flourishes, just ourselves—the family, you know; but we don't regard you as a stranger, and Hope would like to see you, I feel quite sure, so you will turn up in time for it, perhaps?"

"Perhaps," Philip said again, still with the faint smile lingering on his lips; and then he got into the cart that was waiting for him, and was driven away to the station. On the platform he met Dr. Gunter.

"Going to town too. Thought we might as well go together," the bluff old doctor cried, as they exchanged greetings. "Am anxious to see as much of you as I can, Leicester. Life is so strange a shuffle of the cards, and everything is altered. One rubs against someone one likes, and hey presto! the next moment they are gone, and one never sees them again."

"I hope we shall meet again, sir, not once, but many times," Leicester said earnestly. He was more touched than he could well express by the affectionate interest both the doctor and Sir William had expressed for him.

"You are not rushing off to Kamschatka or any outlandish place, then?"

Philip shook his head.

"I think I shall stay in London, for a time at least, sir." He paused a moment. "I want to get something to do—some sort of work."

Dr. Gunter rubbed his nose with his silk pocket-handkerchief until it shone again.

"What sort of work?" he asked gruffly.

Philip laughed a little bitterly.

"The sort of work a man such as I can do. I am fairly well educated, and where books have failed to teach me the world and my fellow-creatures have contributed the rest."

Dr. Gunter was silent a moment.

"And your people, Leicester. What of them?"

The young man's pale face flushed, and then paled again.

"I am alone in the world, Dr. Gunter. I have no people—no family—no one."

The old doctor looked at him keenly. They had seated themselves in a carriage, and the door was closed.

"I see, I see!" Dr. Gunter said, almost to himself. Then abruptly to Philip, "I am an inquisitive old fool, and want to meddle in everyone's business."

"And surely, if anyone has such a right you have it for me, sir," Leicester said, hurriedly. "Do I not owe my life to you? I would gladly," he went on, after a moment's pause, in which Dr. Gunter indulged in some violent protestations to this last assertion, "I would gladly tell you all about myself; but I am not alone in this matter. There is so little to tell—only a story of a boy suffering for another's sin, and a life marred and spoiled by the shadow of a shame that was inherited not merited. I see you understand, sir. It is true I have a family in name, connections that abound in England; but I am dead to them. I died to them all over fifteen years ago, when my father broke my boyish heart, and drove me into the world a nameless beggar."

"He told me then he hoped never to look on my face again; and if in the shuffle of the cards you speak of we are fated to meet, he will not be reminded by me of the sin he dishonoured and debased those years ago. He will see before him a man, who is, in every sense of the word, a stranger to him."

Philip's face was very pale now. His voice was low, and full of strong emotion. Dr. Gunter put out his hand.

"Forgive me, my lad," he said, gently. "I would not have asked the question I did had I known; but I thank you for telling me so much, thank you from the bottom of my heart, for it makes our friendship stronger and deeper, Philip, lad; and you don't need me to tell you I have taken a liking to you, and am glad and honoured to be your friend."

Philip took the outstretched hand, and held it between his own for a moment, and then Dr. Gunter became his own gruff self again.

"Now, as to ways and means. Have you money?" he asked, brusquely. "Forgive me the question, but it is a necessary one, especially as I want to give you a helping hand towards work of some sort."

"Thank you, sir, I have some money. My cattle ranching out west realised a bit, which I invested at once, and which brings me in a small, but steady income. I am a case of the proverbial penny becoming something greater by degrees, for," Philip said, with a smile, "I started my career in the world with very little above that useful coin, and yet I am at this moment a landed proprietor."

"Your life will be interesting to hear one of these days. I love a yarn," Dr. Gunter said, as he lit a cigar.

Philip laughed.

"Oh! my adventures would fill a book. I am half afraid I shall find it hard work settling down after these years spent in traversing the globe."

Dr. Gunter granted a moment to himself, and then turned on Philip.

"No desks or pens for you. You must have an active outdoor life, with plenty of exercise and open air, and plenty of hard work!"

"The harder the better," said Philip, determinedly, his eyes going out to the landscape that was fleeting past them, as they whirled up to the great metropolis.

Dr. Gunter granted again.

"An overseer or land-steward would be the thing," he said, after a moment's pause.

"Yes; but difficult to get."

The doctor pursued the tenor of his thoughts unheeded.

"Not a small affair, something big. There is power of control in that head of yours, Master Philip, or I am much mistaken. You are born to be a leader, a ruler of men, not to be ruled. You must have scope. You have had to hold your own many a time out west, I'll be bound," and the old sportsman looked up sharply at his companion.

Philip smiled for a moment as at some reflection, which conjured up a pleasing, and to him, amusing remembrance.

"Once or twice, yes," he answered, quietly.

Dr. Gunter nodded his head to himself, and puffed away at his big cigar in silence for a moment or so while Philip leaned back against the cushions, and closed his eyes.

He got tired so easily, and he had worked himself into a sort of excitement as he spoke of his father and his boyhood.

"Fine face, fine head!" the old doctor muttered to himself; "as handsome a lad as one could wish to see in a day's march! Nothing dandied about him! Long, thin, nervous hand, with power spelt in every finger-joint! There is blood in him! He comes of good stock! He will do well, poor lad! Poor lad, he speaks bravely; but that old wound is not healed, nor will it heal while life lasts! That's the sort of trouble nothing can cure—the memory of shame to such a one as he! I wish he were my son—there's something about him that goes straight to my heart! Ah! I should be a happier man this day if I could know my fairy were going to tie herself up to Philip Leicester, stranger as he is, than give herself and her sweetness to that handsome bit of selfishness, young Christie! I wish I felt more comfortable about it; but I love the child, and I have a sort of doubt and mistrust for the young fellow. The Christies are a good lot on the whole; but he takes after his mother, and there never was a Warboise with a scrap of

heart! Lady Anne is a clever woman, but she's made of different flesh and blood to our little girl. Well, well!" Dr. Gunter finished with a grunt that was almost a sigh, "we can but pray and hope all will go happily. Impossible to wrap the child up in cotton wool. She has to face the world as others have to. Not all our love and care can prevent sorrow coming, if sorrow is to come!"

Deep in his thoughts, Dr. Gunter had spoken the last words aloud.

Philip opened his eyes, and looked the question he did not ask.

"I am thinking of Hope," Dr. Gunter said, abruptly. "The girl is very dear to me; and marriage is a lottery, Philip, my lad!"

"But you know him—you like him, sir?"

Philip found it no easy task to speak of this subject; why, he had never yet questioned himself.

Dr. Gunter shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, he's a very good sort of chap. Rides well, thorough sportsman, as neat a whip as you may want to see; but, as to a husband—well, that's another matter, and I confess I don't quite see Captain Christie in the part—at least, not as far as the child is concerned."

"Christie!" Philip murmured to himself, for, strange to say, he had never once heard the name of Hope's fiancé mentioned.

"Christie, is it?" Out loud he asked, hurriedly, "What Christie is he?"

"Old Nigel Christie's son, of Avon Court. You may have heard of him. Died eight or ten years back, leaving this boy a moderate fortune, which has gone long ago. I fancy Master Hugh went it pretty hot at first. His mother was third or fourth daughter of that impoverished old rake Henry, Earl of Warboise. Oh, Christie is as well-born and connected as any man could hope to be. His mother is cousin to old Gainsborough; and, if her own birth were nothing, that in itself would be a credential. Oh, if it were a question of birth only," and Dr. Gunter shrugged his shoulders again.

Philip sat quiet, and the doctor, imagining him tired, took up a newspaper, and peremptorily ordered the young man to go to sleep.

"You will be dead if you don't! You are not a Hercules, remember!"

Philip closed his eyes obediently, but not to sleep. Thoughts many and curious crowded his brain. It was almost a relief when the journey came to an end, and they were arrived in London.

"Where are you going to put up?" Dr. Gunter asked; and, as Philip named a quiet hotel in a quiet street, he added, "I think I'll come along too, if you can put up with an old 'un for a little while? I want to run in to Tattersall's to-morrow, and have a business appointment with my lawyer, hang him! How I hate business! And so, Philip, my lad, we'll dine together to-night, and crack a bottle in good style, eh?"

Needless to say, Philip gave a hearty consent, the more so as he was not in the least deceived by Dr. Gunter's very transparent explanations as to the cause of his journey to town.

"Dear old chap, he has come up on purpose to look after me and do me a good turn!" the young man said to himself. "Well, Heaven is good, for it has sent me friends that are friends indeed, and in truth." His hand went for a moment to his breast-pocket. There was a letter there. It was one Hope had written to him just after she left Thickthorn, to go on a visit to Lady Anne Christie. Philip had seen very little of her in the days before her departure, for Lady Carruthers had been very unwell, and the girl sat nursing her step-mother as tenderly as though she owed a real filial duty to the invalid; and then Hope had been almost hurried away on her visit, and Philip had to grow accustomed to the thought that those brief gleams of sunshine were over for him, and nothing remained but the memory of their delicious sweetness. He had the opportunity, when Hope ran in to wish him good-bye, of giving her his ring.

"Please do not refuse me this little gratification," he had said, eagerly, as she hesitated before taking it. "I know you love to give other people pleasure, Miss Hope, and so—"

"And so I must accept the ring. Dear Mr. Leicester! How kind of you, I really don't like to rob you of it, for I know you treasure it, and—"

Philip had slipped the ring quietly on to the largest of her small fingers.

"It is much too big for you," he had said, with a faint smile. "You must have it cut down, or else wear it as a bangle, Miss Carruthers."

Hope had laughed at this—her bright, joyous laugh, that bespoke the youth and happiness in her heart; and then, seeing his pleasure at her acceptance of his gift, she had made no more protests, and had flitted away at last, feeling almost glad she had taken the ring, after all.

"It will be a sort of link between us," she had said to herself. "I should not care to feel that our friendship was ended altogether."

And she had said something of this sort in her little letter to him.

"I have had the ring made smaller, and wear it on my right hand. It looks lovely, and attracts so much attention! Lady Anne was quite curious to see it yesterday, but—another bit of sentiment, Mr. Leicester—I told her I was not going to take it off, that a friend I liked very much had given it to me, and I meant to wear it always, as a remembrance! I am so vain of it. Really it was too good of you to give it to me. I am sure you must miss it very much. I have been photographed since I have been in town, and I will send you one of my pictures if you would care to have it. I should like one of your's when you have one to give me."

And then, with a few more pleasant words, the letter had ended, and was then confided to that inside pocket of Philip's coat, where it had remained ever since. He found himself touching the unconscious paper every now and then, as if it were some talisman to dispel the shadows that would come; and, even though this was not what happened, he certainly derived pleasure in feeling and knowing that he possessed something tangible and actual, the result of the sweet, peaceful hours he had spent in that old-fashioned home.

Philip was quite worn out when they were finally settled in the hotel, and Dr. Gunter took him in hand and packed him off to bed.

"Not much chance of future work for you unless you look after yourself now," he said, in his gruff way. "I don't know that I was quite wise in letting you come away just yet; but you have come, and the next best thing is to see you do not overtax your strength just at the beginning."

The old doctor sat smoking and thinking a long while after Philip had fallen asleep.

"If Dornton is in town I think he can do what we want," he said to himself, after awhile. "The lad shan't lack a good start if I can help him, at any rate."

Those were happy days to Hope—the last that remained to her in her young maiden life.

Lady Anne was charming with the girl. She was a little amused and a great deal bored by Hope's simplicity and unsophistication, and the girl's whole character and nature gave her much food for thought and reflection—reflection that troubled her in some degree, that is, if anything could be said to trouble Lady Anne Christie.

Worldly wise as she was, Hugh's mother was quick to see that this marriage, however satisfactory it might be to Hugh, must be productive of disillusionment to a certainty—sorrow most probably—to Hope.

"The world is a garden to her, full of beautiful flowers, with never a cold wind or a rough path," the elder woman thought, cynically, "and yet, with a sort of regret that came unconsciously, 'she has to face the turnings, to come into the shadows, to see the

flowers droop and die, and to realise that the sun ceases to shine for months at a time."

Lady Anne debated with herself whether she should try to instil some of her worldly knowledge and wisdom into the girl's clear, childlike mind, but she determined at the last she would leave this matter alone.

"Let her be ignorant as long as she can. An awakening must come, but I will not be the one to destroy her perfect contentment."

So she was very charming to the girl, and did all in her power to make the visit pleasant. She had volunteered to undertake Hope's getting together of her trousseau, and generally arranging the dresses, &c., which Mrs. Hugh Christie would require.

Sir William was delighted with this arrangement, as there was no one handy at the moment to do all this.

Lady Hampshire was still prostrated with grief at Blairton Castle, and, besides, she was an old woman.

Hope had not very many cousins and aunts, but such as she had were all scattered for the moment, and Lady Anne was left undisturbed in the, to her, important task of making the girl what she called "presentable."

Most certainly her taste was marvellous, and Hope scarcely knew herself in her new frocks. They were all black or grey, on account of her mourning; but it was wonderful how many changes Lady Anne managed to ring on the same coin. Hope was amazed, and a little alarmed at her large wardrobe.

"I shall never be able to wear all these things," she said to Hugh, who only laughed as he kissed her.

He was not too much with her. Of course he saw her every day, but he pleaded business and a great many engagements, and selfish as she was herself his mother could not restrain a feeling of astonishment at his conduct.

Hope, however, saw nothing strange. She was perfectly happy. She missed her father and Dicky, and spent an hour every day writing to them and sending them some little remembrance.

She wrote, too, to Jack and to Lady Carruthers, and, indeed, forgot no one. Even Brenda she thought of now and again, and she wished in a vague, sorrowful sort of way that her step-sister would let her offer up some of the affections that overflowed in her heart.

Dr. Gunter saw his fairy several times during his stay in town, and gave her news now and then of Mr. Leicester.

"When he is better I think I shall hand him over to old Dornton. You remember Dornton, fairy? That good old chap who came to hunt with the Carruthers' three winters ago. He wants a young man like Leicester, and they will pull together; but now of other things. Weddings don't come every day, and here is a little offering, Mistress Hope. What do you say to that?"

"What am I to say, dear old Gunnie? What lovely pearls! Oh! how everybody spoils me! I don't deserve all this goodness!"

Dr. Gunter kissed her tenderly.

"When you don't deserve it I will tell you."

And with that he took his leave, and did not see his fairy again until he stood in the group at the altar, and heard her plight her troth, and give up her sweet self to the keeping of her husband!

(To be continued.)

If a Chinaman dies while being tried for murder the fact of his dying is taken as evidence of his guilt. He has departed, but somebody must suffer, and his eldest son, if he has one, is therefore sent to prison for a year. If he has no son, then his father or brother gets a flogging. It's all in the family, and somebody has to pay for it.

ETHEL'S FLIRTATION.

—:—

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ETHEL stopped quite still in her pacing up and down the luxurious room, giving her wild thoughts free rein.

"Yes, if that girl was dead I would be safe," she muttered, "safe—and I never shall be safe until she is out of the way." And she wondered dully to what greater depth her mad love for Harry Venn would lead her, and she realised how true it was that when one takes the first step in the downward path of evil how hard it is to keep from sliding further still to the pit that lies buried from view by roses.

Ethel realised but too keenly that all the love Harry had ever had for her had died long since, and that in the few short months he had been thrown in the society of sweet, calm Annie Wells he had learned the one great life-lesson that comes to the heart of every man but once—he had learned the deep, lasting love of a man who has met his ideal at last.

But when he believed he had lost Annie he had turned to her in a moment of pique; and even though Ethel realised this most keenly, she would rather have given up her life than the hope of being Harry's bride.

"So near to the happiness I have planned and sinned for," she muttered, "and now to discover the yawning chasm beneath the slippery narrow plank my feet are treading."

Her future lay in the hands of Powers, and quite well she knew the mercenary nature of the scheming French maid.

The thought was as bitter as the pangs of death to Ethel Whiteley's soul.

The sun rose pink and golden in the eastern sky ere she closed her eyes in sleep. Sitting there, shrouded in the darkness of the night, she had concocted in her brain a plot so terrible against Powers that even she herself shuddered as she pictured it out.

"She stands between me and the happiness of my future," she muttered, recklessly. "Why should I hesitate? She shall realise what it means to make an enemy of Ethel Whiteley!"

It was a very embarrassing moment when Ethel and Powers met the next morning, and the maid showed quite as much diplomacy as her mistress in making not the slightest reference to the occurrence of the previous night, yet the relations between them were decidedly strained.

Two days later Miss Whiteley sent for Powers quite unexpectedly.

"I have been thinking, Powers," she said, "that if a better situation was ever presented to you I could not ask you to remain with me."

Powers looked at her keenly, steadily, but vouchsafed no reply.

"I was talking with a lady yesterday," pursued Ethel, "who sails this week for India, and at the last moment, as it were, her maid declined to accompany her, and the lady is in an awkward dilemma. 'Perhaps Powers would know of some one who could fill her place,' she said. 'Ask her, my dear Ethel. I pay handsomely, and a girl would have quite a lady's life of it.' I thought you might like the situation," Ethel went on, slowly, "and that it would be for the best if you accepted it."

"I have no reason to complain of where I am," returned Powers; "but," she added, significantly, after a moment's pause, "if it could be made an object to me to leave you, mademoiselle, perhaps I might accept."

"The sum the lady named you will consider a nominal one," returned Ethel, "but," she added, in the same quick breath, "in case you go, the present I would make you would more than compensate you."

"We may as well understand each other first as last, miss," said Powers. "Your

present would be money, of course, and I ask: How much do you propose to give me?"

"Two hundred pounds," returned Ethel.

The French maid laughed aloud, and the laugh was not pleasant to hear.

"Two hundred pounds!" repeated Powers. "Why, there is scarcely a month of your precious life, Miss Whiteley, that you do not have more than that trifling sum for spending-money!"

"What has that got to do with it?" cried Ethel, with flashing eyes. "Recipients of a gift should never criticise it."

"I believe I can make better terms with you, miss," declared Powers, boldly. "To speak plainly, it would be better to make a friend of me than an enemy. If you crossed me I might say something that would not be pleasant to hear."

"How much did you expect?" asked Ethel, hoarsely.

"It would be worth at least a thousand pounds to send me away where I would be out of your path for all time," returned Powers.

Ethel grew pale to the lips. She saw plainly she had in Powers a most formidable antagonist, and she realised that she must accede to the girl's demands. The fortune she had come into possession of would enable her to do this very easily, but it would not do to consent too readily.

"I could never give you so much as that, Powers," she declared, "but I will think the matter over and see what I can do."

"I will not take less," returned the girl, emphatically; "and it ought really to take a great deal to satisfy me."

Great as her anger was, Miss Whiteley was too diplomatic to make any sign of it.

When two days had passed, and Ethel made no allusion to the subject again, Powers began to wonder what she intended to do.

"She is up to no good, I'll warrant," thought the girl.

Her surmise proved quite correct; but she would have trembled had she known of the terrible plot the beautiful heiress was weaving in her subtle brain. She was to know of it all too soon.

On the following day, just after luncheon, as Powers was about to commence her usual task of getting her mistress ready for her afternoon drive, Ethel turned to her slowly, saying, quietly,—

"The lady who was to go driving with me complains of a headache so severe that she has concluded to abandon the idea. The rest are equally disinclined, and therefore I have made up my mind to take you, Powers."

The girl was delighted and profuse in her exclamations of delight at the prospect; but she did not feel quite so joyous when she saw the horse that was attached to the light phaeton.

"Oh, Miss Ethel!" she cried, "it is Robin that they have brought for you. Isn't that a mistake? Why, I've often heard Jim the stable-boy say that horse was worse than Satan himself, and few men could manage him."

Ethel Whiteley's crimson lips curled contemptuously.

"I did not know that you were a coward," she said.

"Nor am I," returned Powers, spiritedly. "Of course, if you are not afraid of risking your neck I should not be."

"Get in," said Ethel, and the girl complied. It had often been said that Ethel Whiteley was the best whip in the country.

"Surely here is an animal that will test her skill," was the thought that passed through Powers' mind as she quietly took her seat, and, according to Ethel's instructions, gathered up the reins.

No one could tell just how it happened—whether he was afraid of the whip Miss Whiteley held in her hand, or whether he felt intuitively that the reins were grasped by an inexperienced person; but ere Ethel could place her foot on the low carriage-step the horse wheeled suddenly round with the rapidity of

lightning, and in an instant was dashing madly down the avenue towards the main road, the phaeton with its single terrified occupant swaying from side to side like a leaf in a gale.

Ethel swooned; but when she recovered they told her how the phaeton had collided with the stone gateway, how Powers had been thrown violently to the ground, being picked up unconscious and terribly bruised, and that at present her condition was so precarious that her life was in great danger.

Ethel Whiteley turned her face to the wall with an awful shudder, but uttered no cry, no word of pity.

The people round her did not think of it then, but they remembered it afterwards.

Powers was taken to the county hospital, and while she lay there between life and death Ethel, in order to detract public sympathy from her, told the story of her thefts.

"If she died my only enemy would be swept from the face of the earth!" Ethel would often mutter.

But Powers did not die, and word was sent to The Firs one day to the effect that the girl had a slight chance of recovery, that with careful nursing she might pull through.

Ethel made up her mind immediately upon this information that there was but one course to pursue, and that was to marry Harry Venn ere Powers was able to be about. Once wedded she would be sure of him—no one could take him from her—and Powers would see that it was best to hold her peace for ever—if she was well paid for it.

With this end and aim in view, Ethel sent for Harry to come on to The Firs at once, and wondering at being sent for so summarily, he complied without delay.

He was welcomed warmly by both Mr. Whiteley and his wife, and the thought struck him oddly at that moment—how differently they would have received him had he been only the private secretary instead of a millionaire.

He could not help but follow the train of that thought, and recall how easy it had been for Ethel to give him up in those days when she believed him poor, and destined to go through life blind and crippled; and with deep pain at his heart that he had never felt before, he realised how in that dark past little Annie had loved him. Then he vaguely wondered what had changed her, and how she, of all other women in the wide world, had been tempted to fly with another.

But alas! how quickly death had ended her career of folly. Poor Annie, poor little girl, how sad it was she died so young!

The sudden entrance of Ethel cut short further meditation. She flew into his arms with a glad little cry, and he bent his fair handsome face and kissed her as an engaged lover is in duty bound; but even she noticed how little warmth there was in it, and she grew pale to the lips with bitter disappointment and chagrin.

"I imagined you must be ill, you sent for me so peremptorily," he said, laughingly. "I am pleased to find you in the best of health and spirits;" and as he spoke he drew her down on the seat beside him, but it never occurred to him to put his arm about the slender waist, or offer her the second caress.

She was all that was beautiful in her soft rose-pink faillie dress, with its ruchings of creamy lace, that became her dark, luscious beauty so well. She looked more like the idyllic dream of an artist than an ordinary woman, but her rare beauty had lost the charm it had once possessed for him.

This was another thing that Ethel was beginning to realise, but she never once lost faith in the hope that if she were his wife she could surely win that love back again. She raised her eyes to his at length, and said timidly,—

"I suppose you are wondering all the time, Harry, why I do not tell you just why I sent for you?"

"Naturally," he replied, smiling gravely,

"especially when you stated in your despatch that it was on a matter of importance."

She paled a little, and looked down at her little white hands lying idly in her lap.

"It is simply this, Harry," she said, with an effort at a hearty laugh, "you and I have had a neat little game played upon us, which is embarrassing, to say the least."

He looked at her in puzzled wonder, waiting for her to proceed, which she did at length, asking slowly,—

"Do you remember a Miss Cora East, a young girl who once accompanied me home from the seminary, and stayed during the three weeks' vacation we had?"

"I have a slight recollection of such a girl," he replied, "but I do not think I met her over two or three times."

"Cora was my boon companion at school—as we phrased it—and one day we entered into a solemn compact with each other—that if we ever married it should be at the same place—in short, a double wedding. Now comes the worst part of it. When—when you asked me to be your wife, Harry, I could not refrain from writing to Cora about it, and about how very happy I was; and judge of my astonishment on receiving her reply that she, too had been recently betrothed, and that she would let me know in her next letter when the marriage was to take place. Only yesterday I received it, and it stated she would come in three weeks from that date to The Firs to be married, and that she still held herself bound by the school-girl promise!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Cora was so sure that I would fulfil my part of the agreement," continued Ethel, "that she sent in the announcement of the double wedding to all the society papers, and now I ask you, Harry, what is to be done?"

His face was very pale. He rose hurriedly, and paced nervously up and down the length of the luxurious drawing-room.

"She should have consulted me on such an important step," he said, with much agitation.

"She thought my will was your law, Harry," Ethel answered, huskily, "and fully believed I would be only too pleased to carry out my promise, and that the reminder of it, seeing it in the papers, would quite delight me."

"True I had forgotten to look at it in that light," he said. "I could only think of one thing, and that was the disrespect it would be showing to my poor little Annie's memory to permit the marriage to take place so soon after her terrible death."

Ethel rose quickly to her feet and looked at him steadily.

"Would you cause me the shame of having it postponed?" she asked, huskily, adding—"Remember, no one hereabouts knows of your ill-starred marriage with Annie Wells. It is needless to remind you that I have all the pride of the Whiteleys, and that it would kill me to be made the subject of idle gossip, which would assuredly be the case if—"

With a great burst of sob she broke down utterly, hiding her face in her hands.

"If the marriage had to be postponed," he supplemented, quietly.

She nodded her dark, curly head in assent.

"Nothing shall ever be done to wound or grieve you if I can prevent it, Ethel," he said, gravely. "Do not weep—dry your tears, and let the wedding take place on the date mentioned, for a fate beyond our control seems to have willed it should be so."

When she gained the privacy of her own room that afternoon, Ethel Whiteley told herself that she was, indeed, a most clever girl.

She had certainly planned and executed successfully a most daring scheme. The real facts in the case were that Ethel had written to her friend upon hearing of her approaching wedding, begging that it might be a double

affair, and take place at The Firs three weeks from that date, and the young girl readily consented.

Ethel herself had sent the notices of the approaching wedding to the society papers.

She knew Harry's nature well enough to readily foresee that if publicity was given to the event, stating that it was to take place on a certain day, he would readily acquiesce.

Three weeks would pass by quickly enough with Harry by her side, and then good-bye to the old life! She would marry Harry, and induce him to live abroad.

She built wonderful air-castles of how she would defy Powers to do her worst, if the girl should ever trace her and dare come to her. She would keep the distance of the whole country between Harry and his mother, that she might not be eternally dining in his ears the praises of Annie. She hated the name of Annie, as she had hated the sweet-faced girl who had borne it.

Harry could not find it in his heart to refuse Ethel when she urged so persistently that he should remain at The Firs until the ceremony took place. He found the days hanging long and tedious on his hands, and he wondered how he would pass his lifetime with Ethel when he found a fortnight with her so tiresome. Besides, there was plenty of diversity in the way of amusement, for The Firs was always thronged with merry guests.

Harry was not a young man who was demonstrative in his affection. He was now all that—attentive to Ethel, anticipating her every want, and constantly by her side; but those who watched him keenly noticed there was certainly a lack of true love in his heart toward the beautiful girl whom he was soon to make his bride.

His eyes never brightened when she entered the room, and they never followed her—a lover's eyes are wont to do—when she left it. He was never jealous or impatient, no matter how long she talked with gentlemen, nor did he seem to be the least concerned as to how many smiles she gave them. They wondered curiously how a girl like dark-eyed Ethel Whiteley could have chosen so cold a lover.

Her idolatrous love was certainly patient enough to every one. The girl seemed to live only in his presence—all her brightness, her gaiety and smiles seemed to fall from her when he left her.

Her girl-friends spoke of it among themselves with wonder.

"It is not right to idolise a man after that fashion," they would declare—and they felt sorry for Ethel.

They all knew how devotedly Harry Venn had loved the lawyer's lovely daughter when he was only her father's secretary, and they quite believed it must be the newly-acquired wealth which had caused such a change in him. How little they knew of the man's heart—how it was wearing itself out for love of the one he had lost, and that even in his sleep he would often eagerly call upon a name, and that name was—Annie.

Yes, they felt sorry for Ethel, and they speculated as to what she would ever do if she were to lose him. What a pity that he could not love her as she loved him!

"There are some lines I read somewhere which always occur to me when I see them together," said one of the young girls, as they were discussing the subject one day. "Here they are;" and she repeated slowly:

"Starved—starved—starved!

Yet queen of the feast was she,
And a liveried servant's ebony hands
Proffered the fruits of tropical lands
To her on bended knee;
Yet a horrible hunger night and day
Was gnawing her life and strength away.

Dying—dying of thirst,

Tho' at her lightest will
The costliest wines like water flowed,
Foamed in the crystal and gleamed and glowed,
But left her thirstier still;

But she felt that the fruit and wine were cursed,
For she starved with hunger and choked with thirst.

Many a suitor wooed,

For she was passing fair;
Fortunes were proffered and jewels bought,
And challenges given and duels fought;

But what did my lady care?
For she wooed her love and gave her heart
To one who haughtily stood apart.

She thirsted for one fond look,

She starved for a kiss denied;
But he cared no more for her smile or blush
Than the glacier cares for the red rosebush;

And she pined away and died.
And true hearts mourned her many a year
While the man she died for shed not a tear.

'Tis ever the way of the foolish fair
To die for the one who does not care."

The group of girls who had been discussing the matter had entered the drawing-room, indulged in their little gossip half-an-hour or more, and then passed out. They had imagined themselves talking in the strictest privacy, and not one of them dreamed of looking behind the heavy silken portières that screened the bay-window looking out upon the lawn.

Had they done so they would have seen a white-faced girl leaning heavily against the marble fluted. It was Ethel Whiteley.

"Every one sees, every one knows that he does not love me," she moaned; "but I never knew that his coldness to me was becoming public talk. Ah! pitying Heaven, is there any fate more cruel than to love deeply, passionately, with all the strength of one's heart and soul, and not be loved in return? And yet for all that I would rather be his wife, though he abhorred me, than be the bride of any other man, though he placed the wealth of the whole world at my feet."

The days flew quickly by, and at length the night preceding Ethel's wedding-day arrived.

The Firs was filled with guests, for the marriage was to take place early the following forenoon.

One by one the lights from the many windows had gone out, and one by one the guests had sunk to sleep, but one figure never stirred from its place by the window, though the clock in an adjacent belfry had long since pealed the midnight hour. It was Ethel.

She threw up the sash and leaned her hot, flushed face far out into the night winds.

A sudden temptation came to her to leave her room and go out into the grounds, late as the hour was, and bid good-bye to the trees and flowers she had loved so well.

She was going away on the morrow. Would she ever again see them with the moonlight shining upon them?

Ethel caught up a thin scarf, wound it about her head, and hurried silently through the darkened house and into the shadowy grounds.

Some impulse she could hardly account for drew her out of her way down to the beach-walk. How dark and gloomy it looked down that dim avenue of bending trees, whose branches, rocked by the sobbing night winds, swayed dimly to and fro.

"I have played under their shade a light-hearted, merry child; I have walked with Harry in those days when he loved me so well—a happy girl; and I shall pass down this avenue to-morrow, leaning upon his arm—his bride.

"I shall try to commence life all over again from the hour that we are wed. I shall try to blot out, if it lays within human power, that one awful scene that has haunted me day and night. My flesh creeps even now when I think of it! How horrible that the memory of it should be so strong upon me to-night!

"I have asked myself over and over again if I am sorry, and I cannot answer 'No,' for had it not happened I should never have been Harry Venn's bride. No, I cannot say that I regret it, for it will gain me at last the love of

the only man on earth I could ever care for.

The sentence was never finished, for Ethel had come suddenly across a dark figure seated upon one of the benches—the figure of a woman!

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" Ethel demanded, stopping short.

The dark figure turned slowly toward her, and the moonlight fell upon her face.

"Oh! Heaven!" shrieked she, with a wild cry. "It is a ghost—the ghost of Annie!"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE dark figure rose slowly and approached her.

"Hush! unless you would alarm the whole household," said a voice that was decidedly human. "I am not a ghost. I am indeed Annie!"

"Annie could not come back from the Black Pool!" cried Ethel, in awful terror. "I saw her go down and the black waters close over her."

"That was your will, Ethel Whiteley," returned the other, solemnly. "But Heaven willed differently. You would have committed a terrible crime had I died in the dark water into which you thrust me; you are saved from the responsibility of an awful sin deliberately planned. I have come here to-night to save you from committing on the morrow another and as a great a sin—that of marrying a man who has a living wife. I have travelled footsore many a weary mile to tell you that I—poor, despised, heart-broken Annie—am Harry Venn's wedded wife!"

After the first great shock Ethel Whiteley grew suddenly brave. She realised with a thrill of rage that this was indeed Annie in the flesh.

Before she had time to utter the words that sprung to her lips, the girl went on huskily,—

"I was just about to tell you this at that fatal moment when you struck me down with so cowardly a blow."

"I wish I had killed you!" cried Ethel, frantically. "I am loth to believe my own eyesight in seeing you standing here when I saw you go down into the dark water."

"Let me tell you how I was saved," said Annie, slowly; "and after I have told you all, permit me to implore you to let me see my husband just one little minute, then he can go out of my life—for ever!"

"Whatever he may have been to you, Harry Venn is not your husband now!" cried Ethel, triumphantly. "I will tell you what will be news to you, perhaps. Harry has secured a decree of divorce from you. When search was made for you and you could not be found, it was readily given him for—your abandonment."

"And you, knowing the truth, let that infamous wrong go on?" inquired Annie, looking at her beautiful, defiant rival with sad, tear-wet eyes.

"What was your memory or your reputation worth to me?" retorted Ethel, fiercely.

"True, I had forgotten that," returned the other.

"And as you are nothing—living or dead—to Harry Venn, I now order you from these grounds. Go your way! He would spurn you from him if you were to seek him!" cried Ethel, hotly.

"I do not believe in breaking the bonds that Heaven imposes upon those who take upon themselves the solemn marriage vows. In the sight of Heaven I am his wife—though but a wife in name only—and will be his wife until death claims me!"

"Your faith in your power of claiming a man who has learned to abhor you is very strong," sneered Ethel, "but you will soon find out you have made a mistake, and a glaring one, in daring to come here on such an errand."

"I shall never leave these grounds until

after I have seen and spoken with my—my husband!" declared the girl, in a low, steady voice.

Even in the dim light Annie could see how white Ethel Whiteley's face grew, and how the fire flashed in her dark, merciless, glaring eyes.

The memory came to Ethel, as she stood there facing Annie, how she had lured the girl at night to the Black Pool, and there taunted her with how little Harry Venn cared for her, of the light words he spoke of her, and last, but by no means least, how Harry had vowed only that evening that he loved herself—Ethel—and only endured the presence of Annie because it was forced upon him, and that he had only been loaned to Annie, as it were, and that he thought it was about time the farce ended.

"I cannot, I will not believe that!" Annie cried, beating the air with her little white hands, "I will ask him to-night when I return to the house!"

"You shall not—you must not!" Ethel had expostulated, in fright.

"I will!" sobbed Annie. "I shall not be taunted by the words, 'my lover was only loaned to me,' any longer. He must choose between you and me, Ethel Whiteley, and I shall tell him so!"

In the height of her ungovernable rage at this she had turned and struck Annie on the face with her clinched white hand, and the girl fell a senseless heap at her feet. The ground was steep just there, and ere she could spring forward to prevent the awful calamity, Annie had rolled into the waters of the Black Pool, and she distinctly saw the waters close over the white, terrified face. With a shriek of mortal terror Ethel had fled from the spot, never pausing until, panting and gasping, she reached her own room, and there fell in a deep swoon to the floor. But how did Annie escape the horrible death that seemed at the time inevitable? Ethel's intense curiosity got the better of her rage and hatred.

"I—I did not mean to push you in the pool," she faltered, hoarsely, adding, in a shivering breath: "How did you escape? Who saved you?"

"You did not wait to see," returned Annie, sternly. "I will tell you."

"I dropped, to the earth stunned for an instant, when you struck me; but when I touched the water I revived and realised my horrible fate. I felt myself sinking—going down, down into the awful depths, and my heart went up in one wild prayer to Him who watches over those who have always trusted in Him. Then as suddenly I felt myself ascending. In an instant more I reached the surface of the pool, and my face cleared the black waters."

"Catch on the willow boughs right here, and I will draw you out!" I heard some one shout. I did so, and the next instant a pair of stout hands began to draw me from the water. Then I heard broken exclamations in French, and even in the midst of my peril I recognised the voice of Powers, your maid. By almost Herculean strength she drew me from the water, letting go her hold when she had dragged me a foot or so from the edge, and then, overcome by the great and terrible ordeal through which she had passed, she sunk beside me in a deep swoon.

"I can only partly remember what passed after that. I crept away to get aid for her, and fell exhausted among the bushes. When she recovered she searched for me, calling out my name, and I tried to answer her, but the words died on my lips, leaving no sound."

"*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" she cried, wringing her hands frantically. "She has rolled back into the Black Pool again. My effort to save the poor thing was useless after all!" and she turned from the pool and walked back to the house with an unsteady step.

"How long I lay there I never knew. A day and a night must have passed. I was faint from hunger and thirst, and I realised that no one would ever come to search for me

there. I tried to make my way back to the house, but I must have wandered away in an opposite direction. Long days seemed to pass, and at length I found myself in a great cornfield, with the plying faces of two women bending over me. They took me to their home and cared for me, and there I hovered between life and death from that time until a week ago. I must have wandered many a mile from home for when I awoke to consciousness and inquired for the place they did not know where it was, but after much inquiry they found it. They also brought me the startling intelligence that the place was closed, that the master had gone away to wed a lovely bride, and that his mother had followed soon after to be present at the ceremony. I uttered no cry—no moan—though the intelligence almost killed me."

"That very day I set out for this place, and I am here at last, thank Heaven!"

"All I ask of you is this one favour, Ethel Whiteley. Let me look upon Harry's face for one moment—let me hear his voice, that was the sweetest music on earth to my ears, and then I will go quietly away and leave him to you. I do not care what will become of me after that."

While Annie had been speaking a terrible plan had been forming in the brain of Ethel Whiteley. When one takes the first step on the downward path of sin they find the path easy to traverse, and it was so with her. Standing there, she renewed the vow she had once taken—that even this girl's life should not stand between her and the one great goal of her ambition—that of being Harry Venn's wife.

Only a few hours more and her hopes would have been realised. Would have been! Ah! they must be realised still, was the cry that welled up from her heart; and she knew full well that there would be an end to all her plans if Harry should see Annie again.

She bent suddenly and took Annie's little cold hand.

"It is but natural that you should wish to see him again," she said, hoarsely. "The hour is late, but he is still in the library. Come with me, and—and I will take you to him."

The pity of it was that poor Annie believed her words, that she trusted one who had played her so falsely in the dark, dread past; but the girl's heart was guileless and trustful, and she allowed Ethel to lead her towards the house.

There was no word of warning to her to beware as she crossed that fatal portal. Surely the girl's guardian angels, if they knew the fate in store for her, must have wept tears of pity for her.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE midnight bell slowly tolled the solemn hour of twelve as the two dark figures stole silently through the corridors of the darkened and silent house.

"We will go to the library by the rear stairway, that we may not disturb the rest of the inmates," whispered Ethel, cautiously.

"You know best," murmured Annie.

But when Ethel ascended the third stairway the girl paused, drawing back in wonder.

"I thought you said that Harry—that he was in the library," she faltered.

"We have fitted up the large round room in the tower for a summer reading-room," returned Ethel, in a hoarse, constrained voice, adding: "It is cooler and pleasanter there. Harry always prefers taking his books and papers there."

Annie made no further objection, and followed her blindly and silently, until they stood at length before the great oaken door of the tower.

"He is in there," said Ethel. "Enter alone."

Annie reached forth her hand timidly and turned the heavy iron knob. Ah, me! how

hard it was to turn it. It seemed to her as though the lock was rusty, for it took the united strength of both hands to force the door open. Instead of the flood of light and the beloved face she had expected to see she found herself in utter darkness, and at that instant she was pushed violently forward, and with lightning-like rapidity the heavy door swung to after her with a dull thud.

A cry of terror broke from her lips.

"Ethel!" she cried, groping frantically for the door again. "Ethel, the door has blown to. There is no one here—the room is in utter darkness!"

A laugh so horrible that it made Annie's heart stop beating and the blood turn to ice in her veins answered her through the key-hole.

"You have been neatly trapped," cried Ethel Whiteley, in a fiendish voice that sounded scarcely human to the horrified girl within, who listened like one turned to stone. "You have been cleverly duped, I say. Did I not tell you that if you persisted in coming between me and the man I love I would find a means of putting you out of the way forever? I told you that as we stood on the brink of the Black Pool, and you would not heed me then. I told you the same to-night in the rose arbour, and you vowed you would see him again, and in forewarning me thus you took your fate into your own hands. You shall not come between me and my marriage with Harry Venn to-morrow. While it is taking place you will be a close prisoner here, and you will remain here until death releases you, be that time long or short. No one will ever find you here," continued she, in the same pitiless voice. "Your cries, should you waste your strength in that pastime, will never penetrate the thick walls. You are as completely shut off from the outside world as though you were in your tomb, and such it will be soon enough. When you hear the bells chiming in the adjacent bellries to-morrow noon you can realise what they are ringing for—it will be to celebrate my marriage with Harry Venn. Good-bye, Annie Wells or Venn, or whatever you choose to call yourself," the mocking voice went on, "for we shall never meet again!"

A key turned in the rusty lock from the outside. There was the sound of rapidly retreating footsteps, then all was silent as the grave, and Annie knew that Ethel Whiteley had indeed deserted her.

She tried to cry out, but all power of speech seemed to have suddenly deserted her. Then there was a sound of rushing, roaring waters in her ears, and the girl knew no more. She had sunk to the floor in a deep swoon.

It was long hours ere she gained consciousness again. She struggled to her feet, gazing around her in utter bewilderment, trying to realise where she was.

The knowledge came to her all too soon.

Like a flash, as her eyes rested on her surroundings, memory returned to her.

Ah, Heaven! Surely Ethel had not meant her terrible threat of leaving her there to die. No woman living in an enlightened world, with a heart in her bosom, could be so heart-rendingly cruel.

With a terrified cry Annie sprang to the door. Surely Ethel had left it unlocked. With both hands she grasped the knob and frantically endeavoured to dash open the door. But it was useless, worse than useless, and she realised, with horror, that it was firmly fastened—looked upon the outside!

Wild, piercing cries broke from Annie's lips for help; but no help came to her. She tore at the great iron lock until her slender white fingers were bruised and bleeding; but it would not yield.

At length she sunk down upon her knees, crying out that it was indeed true that Ethel Whiteley had lured her there—to die!

This thought almost frenzied Annie. By the dim light of a small, crescent-shaped pane of glass set close to the ceiling she could distinguish faintly the objects about her, and

she frantically set about to discover some means of escape.

How well she remembered now what she had not thought of before—that long ago the windows of the tower had been bricked up to keep out the owls that always succeeded in breaking the panes and making their homes in there, making life hideous to the inmates of the house by their wild cries and screeches, and on that account that part of the house had been gradually deserted, even by the servants, and it had fallen into disuse, save as a receptacle for odds-and-ends of furniture and bric-a-brac over which the dust lay white and thick.

As Annie stood there, with face white as death, gazing about her, she thought of the story of poor Genevieve, the poor, hapless, beautiful young bride famed in song and story, who had met just such a tragic death as the one that was to be meted out to her, and the very thought of it filled her with terror.

Suddenly the chiming of far-off bells smote upon her ear, and she remembered Ethel's parting taunting words.—

"When you hear the bells chiming they will be chiming for my wedding."

And as she listened pangs more bitter than death swept through her heart, and she buried her face in her hands, bursting into passionate tears.

By the time the bells stopped ringing, would Ethel be Harry Venn's wife?

The law had parted them, but she would rather have heard the tidings of his death than of his marriage with Ethel.

So many worshipped the proud, beautiful heiress, why could she not have chosen some of these and leave Harry alone? If wealth had never come to him the haughty heiress would never have wanted him, while she—ah, pitying Heaven!—she could have loved him through the direst poverty with all the strength of heart and soul. Why had not Heaven given her the one thing for which she had prayed, as few women pray, from the moment she had looked upon the handsome, winning face that had been her lodestar ever since, even though at that time he was Ethel's lover? When their eyes met in that first glance, in that moment she had felt the force of the magnetic attraction that is always sure to come to two hearts that Heaven intended for each other; in that instant her heart seemed to awaken rudely from a deep sleep, and something stirred the depths of the girl's soul with a pleasure so great it had been almost pain, and the subtle touch of the firm white hand that he held out to her had sent a thrill through all her being.

She had loved him from that moment, and would love him until the hour her eyes closed in death, and her last prayer would be that she might be laid to rest near where he might sometimes pass.

Again the chiming of bells pealed out, then suddenly ceased. Were they wedded? Ah, pitying angels! she loved him so well, it was a wonder that her heart did not break with the anguish the thought brought her.

She tried to picture the scene—Ethel in her bridal robes, clinging to his arm, looking up into the face that would look so smilingly down into hers.

"I cannot bear it," sobbed Annie, wildly. "The very thought drives me to madness!"

She looked back to that other marriage, and contrasted it with this. What a pale, terrified, timid little bride she had been, standing by Harry's side before the feeble old minister who had joined them together, "until death did them part," as he had said.

The weird scene had hardly seemed real to her, as, leaning pale and weak against his strong tender arms, she stood out in the sunshine with her husband.

"Annie, my little wife," he had said, stopping short in the path, raising her face with his hand and looking laughingly down into her eyes and at her painfully flushed face.

"It seems like some strange, awful dream, Harry," she had sobbed. "Are you sure it is real?"

"You must not use the words 'awful dream,' Annie," he had said, gravely, reprovingly! "say rather that it seems like a strange, sweet dream. Yes, you are my wife. Are you pleased?"

She could not have answered him to have saved her life. Surely the question was needless. Could he not see the lovelight on her face, read it in her happy eyes, and know it by the loud, tremulous beating of her heart?

"Give me one kiss to assure me that you are, Annie," he said. "There is no one coming up the path—no one will see. Look up and kiss me of your own free will, and say: 'Harry, my husband! I should like to hear the words on your lips.'"

She was so happy she could not have complied to have saved her life, for her heart was throbbing and every nerve was tingling. Poor little soul, so supremely happy! She who had never known a lover's kiss or caress, could almost as soon have died as to have made the first advance, even though he who had asked it was her young husband.

"Well, as you please, Annie," he had said, turning away lightly, just a little disappointed and piqued. "Perhaps you are right."

She had looked up at him timidly from beneath her great long lashes, hoping that he would stoop down and kiss her, or—or ask her again.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Ah, cruel wedding-day! No wonder Annie wept as few women weep as she looked back at it.

They had parted at the door without even a hand-clasp. Harry had gone on to the library, and she had walked slowly up to her room; and for hours afterwards her heart and brain had been in a whirl, as she repeated over and over to herself the sweet words:

"Heaven is kind, for my one prayer has been granted. I am now Harry's wife—his wife! I shall go through life by his side, his companion by night and by day;" and a flood of happy tears filled her blue eyes as she gave herself up to the bewildering day-dreams of the golden future.

She remembered how her heart had throbbed when she met him at luncheon.

She had felt like going up to him, and, kneeling before him, whisper,—

"Why need we keep our marriage a secret? We ought to tell your mother and Ethel today—now."

Then had come that evening in the drawing-room when he had been so attentive to Ethel as they tried new songs together, and seemed, to have almost forgotten her presence. How little she had dreamed, as she rose and hurriedly quitted the room, that she was destined never to look upon his face in this life again, for on that night she had met with the tragic occurrence at the Black Pool.

Had he indeed married her in a moment of thoughtlessness—regretting it as soon as the ceremony had been performed, and eagerly seizing the first opportunity to annul that bondage and free himself?

"If his life will be the happier for it I must bear my lot without complaining," moaned Annie.

Would to Heaven she could have looked upon his face just one little moment, and then have gone quietly away, was the despairing cry of her heart. But to die like this and she so young and life so sweet to her! Ah, pitying Heaven! did ever a young girl meet a more pitiful fate?

For long hours she searched vainly for some means of making her escape, but it was useless; there was no way of exit from the tower save by the oaken door. Her wild cries had proved futile, and her desperate efforts to attract the attention of the servants by the noise of pushing the heavy articles of furniture over the wooden floor proved useless.

How was she able to know that the sound was completely drowned by the hammers of

carpenters repairing the stairway of the western wing?

Could no one hear her cries? Was it destined that she should die there in all her youth and strength?

A great faintness seized her as time wore on; her mouth was parched; she would have given worlds for one drop of cooling water, and she was weak too from want of food.

She had often read with pity of the horrible torture of starvation. Was she beginning to experience it, she wondered vaguely, lifting her heavy, tear-dimmed eyes to the small bit of window-pane near the ceiling, through which the waning light drifted in.

Long hours came and went, and Annie's sufferings grew so intense at length, as the hours lengthened into the third day, that she prayed Heaven to send relief or death to her.

Suddenly a strange thought came to her. She remembered that in the pocket of her dress was a small vial containing a darkish liquid, which the doctor who had so lately attended her during her recent illness had left with her at parting.

"In your hands I think it will be safe," he had said, kindly; "though it is a dangerous drug if taken in any quantity, three drops will revive you while a dozen would produce death."

"It is fate that I have it with me," thought Annie, putting her cold, trembling hand in the pocket of her dress.

"A dozen drops would produce death!" she repeated. "Ay, one draught of it will put me out of my misery. Why should I suffer when I have relief from all ills in my very grasp? Good-bye, Harry, my first and only love," she sobbed, raising the fatal vial. "You will never know that I died with your name on my lips—you will never know, when you think of poor Annie, how well she loved you—that you were the only gleam of brightness that lighted a desolate life. Another will claim you here, Harry, my love, but I will be waiting for you up there. Heaven would not be Heaven to me—without you!"

With a little piteous "Heaven forgive me!" she raised the vial to her lips.

One instant more and a life which was at stake would have been sacrificed; but it was not to be, for in that instant there was heard a sudden booming sound, followed by a severe shock that shook the house to its very foundation, and a deafening sound of fallen rocks and timber, and the western wall of the tower fell outward with a loud crash.

The shock had hurled Annie to the floor, and the vial she held in her hand was dashed into a thousand fragments. There was a sudden glare of light in the darkened room—blood-red, mixed with the feeble light of a dying day, and the next instant a great volume of thick, black smoke shut even that from her view.

Annie uttered no cry, no moan; she was too weak, too dazed for that, though she realised at once that the western wall of the tower had fallen, and that the whole structure was on fire.

She could hear the hoarse screams of people as she crept towards the jagged opening, the ringing of fire bells, and the wild trampling of hurried feet.

For an instant the thick volume of smoke cleared, and, looking down through the intense white heat, Annie saw a great sea of upturned faces.

"Help! help!" she cried, stretching out her white arms to the crowd below, "Save me!"

Then a great puff of blinding smoke hid her from their view.

But they had seen her, and a wild cry of horror broke from every lip, and cries of,—

"By Heaven! there is a woman in the tower!"

"Save me!" cried the faint voice again.

They all heard, and strong men turned pale and women fainted.

The crowd below seemed paralyzed. What man among them dared risk his

life in that burning fire-trap? Even the ladder which had been placed at one of the upper windows had already become sport for the flames.

Two brave men had made the daring attempt of mounting the ladder as far as the second floor, but the intense heat drove them back.

"It is useless," they cried, dropping back in despair. "The girl is beyond mortal aid—her doom is sealed!"

"Stand back!" cried a clarion voice. "I will make the attempt!"

And ere they could prevent him Harry Venn, who had forced his way through the crowd, leaped upon the burning ladder.

There was a hushed cry as he disappeared through one of the arched windows, and above it they heard the piercing scream of a woman hedged in by the dense throng, and they recognised her at once as Harry's mother.

"Why did not someone hold him back?" she cried, frantically. "He has gone to his death—and he was my only son!"

A hoarse shout drowned her voice. "See, he has reached the tower!" came from a dozen throats.

Every face was upturned.

For one brief instant the smoke cleared away, and they saw him dash past the opening.

In that one instantaneous glance they saw that his face was pale as death, but resolute and brave; then a great cloud of smoke hid him from their view again. A moment of dreadful suspense dragged itself by.

Oh! how his mother fell on her knees, holding out her hands to Heaven to save her boy—her only son!

Another moment passed, and it seemed the length of eternity to those who watched with white upturned faces and strained eyes; but he did not reappear.

Some interior portion of the house fell in with a dull thud, and a hushed cry rose from every throat. Had it carried with it the noble hero who had risked his life to save the young girl in the tower?

The people looked at one another with pallid faces and moist eyes; then looked in pity at the frantic mother; who was still petitioning the angels to return her darling, her only son to her.

Suddenly a great cry broke from every lip. They beheld Harry at the window, with the slender form of the girl in his arms.

A dozen strong men sprung forward to steady the swaying ladder down which he had commenced clambering.

They all noticed how he swayed and reeled with every step, and a new horror filled every breast. He must be badly injured. They could see that he made the descent with much difficulty, and they were not surprised when, within six feet or so from the ground, he suddenly reeled and fell backward with his heavy burden clutched closely in his arms.

A dozen pairs of hands were instantly stretched out to save him, and when they laid him down tenderly on the grass by his mother's side cheer after cheer rent the air.

The next instant the four walls of the house fell in with a deafening crash.

One glance at the girl her son had saved and Mrs. Venn fell backward with a hysterical cry.

"Do I dream—or do my eyes deceive me?" she whispered, in an awe-struck voice. "It is—Annie! But no; it cannot be, for she sleeps in her far off grave. It is some fatal resemblance."

But even as she muttered the words the crowd pressing round the girl cried,—

"It is Annie Wells, the miller's niece, who disappeared from the village months ago!"

No one in her old home, save Mr. Whiteley and his wife, knew that Annie had accompanied the Venns to their new home and of the subsequent events that had transpired, therefore none had heard the story of her supposed death.

Kind hands quickly removed Harry and Annie to a neighbouring house, where the inmates of The Firs had found shelter, Mrs. Venn following like one in a dream.

Who was this creature who had been saved from the tower, who bore so striking a resemblance to poor dead Annie?

What would Mr. Whiteley and his wife say when they looked upon her face? And Ethel, who two days before had become Harry's wife—why, the terrible resemblance might kill her!

(To be continued.)

A TERRIBLE ORDEAL.

—201—

CHAPTER XV.

It seemed to John Melville and his wife that their trouble was hard to bear. They had never crossed Paul in any of his wishes. From his childhood they had let him have an opinion of his own in shaping out his life.

Bitter as was their disappointment when he refused to enter the thriving business in which both took such honest pride, neither of them had opposed his striking out a line for himself.

His father had done his utmost to make the young man's career plain sailing; the mother and sister had taken Paul's fiancée to their hearts, and cherished her as one of themselves. There was no cloud, as far as they could guess, on Paul's future, no dark secret in his past, and yet he had vanished like a shadow—had given up the career which he had chosen, forsaken the girl he loved, and gone forth into the world a fugitive and an exile from home and kindred!

Jessie Campbell had told Mr. Melville she thought it right for Paul to go, and that she should be true to him all her life. They had never loved each other better, added the gentle girl, than when they parted. But this, which might have been a consolation, only added to the parents' grief, since it made their son's disappearance the more inexplicable.

From the first they resolved to keep their trial as far as possible to themselves; even their daughters were not allowed to share their anxiety.

"Paul had gone to America on important business, and would not distress them all by saying good-bye," was what the three sisters were told; and, being good, commonplace, unemotional girls, with none of their brother's nervous sensitiveness, they accepted the statement simply, and only remarked what a pity it was he would miss the wedding!

How Mrs. Melville managed to get through all the attendant fuss of the first wedding in her family, how she contrived to keep a cheerful smile for the bride, and not let the sorrow at her own heart shadow her daughter's joy, only mothers know.

She was thankful when it was all over. Bride and bridegroom departed for their honeymoon, Florence away on a visit, and only Blanche, the youngest of the girls, left at home.

Mrs. Melville was an intensely just woman. She never even in her own thoughts blamed Jessie Campbell for her son's strange conduct. She felt deeply for the poor girl's bereavement; and when she heard of the penniless condition of the orphans and their half-brother's parsimony, she urged her husband to beg Jessie to come to Warham and live with them.

"It is better as it is," said the linen-draper, gravely, when he told his wife of Jessie's refusal of this offer. "You see, poor girl, here everyone knew she was engaged to Paul, and with the best of good will we couldn't prevent her being asked continually 'when the wedding was to come off'; then, too, here everything reminds her of our boy. No, depend upon it, Susy, the poor child's better

at Dornington helping her family and doing her duty."

The mother's eyes were full of tears.

"If you would only tell me all you know, John! I can't help thinking you are keeping something back! Did you hear nothing in London?"

"Nothing that will make you happier, dear!"

"But I would rather know!"

"Well, then, I made inquiries, and I hear he came back from his long holiday down here gloomy and discontented. His London friends couldn't make out what was the matter. His landlady declares he sat up to all hours in the morning alone in his little study, till she got frightened he'd set the place on fire and burnt it down. They all say the same thing. He had no money troubles. Indeed, I went round to his tradespeople to try and settle what was due, but they told me he had paid up everything to the last farthing the Saturday he came down here. He had removed everything from his lodgings, too, and paid the woman a week's rent instead of notice. It was no sudden freak his disappearance, Susy. It must have been carefully planned beforehand."

"I thought he would come back now!" said Mrs. Melville, with a stress on the last word. "He must know that Jessie is in trouble. I believed, when he saw her father's death in the newspaper, nothing would keep him away; and it is not such a very long voyage to America."

Mr. Melville looked perplexed.

"You know, Susy, I don't believe he went to America."

"But Jessie said so."

"And I am sure she thought so; but 'America' is often used as a mere *faci-m de parlo*. Just as an angry man may tell a person who has displeased him to 'go to Jericho,' so any one much troubled and distressed if asked where they were going might say 'Oh, America—anywhere!'"

"And what can we do?"

"Jessie says—nothing!"

"But it is different for us," said the mother, eagerly. "The poor girl might from maidenly delicacy scruple to try and find him; but we, who are his parents, need not mind such things."

"Susy," and the linen-draper laid his hand tenderly on his wife's shoulder, "you believe I love the lad, don't you?"

"Why, John, of course I do!"

"Then, dear, you won't mistrust me, when I tell you I feel it's best to let well alone. So long as we make no stir about Paul's absence, and seem to take it quite as a matter of course, the way is open for our boy to return to us without a breath of blame—without the need of a single explanation to outside people. Wife, it seems to me the only thing left us to do for our boy is to keep his secret."

"But he may be starving," objected Mrs. Melville. "He may die far away, and we never know!"

"I don't think Paul's the fellow to starve, with his clear head and strong arm, and I believe his heart is tender enough to make him send us word if illness or danger threatened him."

They would have been bewildered could they have seen Paul at the moment they were discussing him. Mr. Melville was quite right America had nothing to do with the young man's absence. When he left Warham he travelled straight to Harwich, crossed the next day to Hamburg, and seemed to give himself up completely to an idle tour through Germany.

The grave, silent young Englishman, who spoke their language so perfectly, and was so strangely reserved as to the motives of his presence among them, was a puzzle to many of the kind German frans who presided over the boarding houses where Mr. Smith—Paul had dropped his own name—put up. He had plenty of money—for though he lived plainly he paid promptly for everything, and as he did not attempt to earn anything, he must

have started with a well-filled purse. His plan was very simple. He put up for a week or longer at the largest boarding-house in a town, and made daily excursions to every spot of interest in the vicinity. These exhausted, he pushed on to another.

He never made acquaintance from among his fellow-guests at any of the boarding-houses he patronised. He never once entered the salon, as, in imitation of the French, the general sitting-room was called. Many a fair-haired German fraulein smiled on him in vain. He never seemed even to see their little blanchissements. He was as a man possessed of some grave purpose, who could not rest until, and would think of nothing else before, it was accomplished.

"A regular bear," said one of two sisters, who were spending a year at Hanover to complete their musical education. "I can't think what he has come here for!"

"I don't think he means to be rude," said the younger of the two. "It is only that he is so grave and sad. I should fancy he had had some awful trouble, and it had crushed him."

"I wonder he does not wear himself out," returned her sister. "He is up at some unearthly hour, and the frau says his lights are never out before one at the earliest, and then all day he is walking about."

"Perhaps he an artist."

"Pooh!" objected Emilia. "Artists don't go on sketching tours in March!"

"I think I shall ask him," said Hildegard. "It must be so awful for him never to speak a word to anyone, and he sits next me at dinner. The frau says he understands German perfectly."

The sisters, who came from an obscure Westphalian village, spoke only their own language. They were kindly, well-meaning girls, and although Emilia's criticism sounded harsh she was very good-natured. Being past early youth (they were both well on towards thirty), and their own mistresses, the two ladies had no duenna to fear. Orphans with the modest income of a hundred a-year each, with their simple tastes they felt quite rich, and received a certain amount of "consideration" from most of Frau Brinkmann's boarders. They had now been travelling about for nearly three years, and it says something for their good sense, and more for their good hearts, that in all that time they had never been involved in the slightest quarrel with one of their own, or a single idle flirtation with one of the opposite sex.

Hildegard was as good as her word. That night at "supper"—a kind of medley meal served at eight o'clock, she turned to Mr. Smith with the question, had he been long in Germany? Was he contemplating a long stay at Frau Brinkmann's?

A chilling monocyllable rose to Paul's lips, but the face which awaited his answer was so simple and good-natured that he felt forced to answer, courteously,—

"That does not depend on myself, Fraulein. I may be here a few days longer. I may go to-morrow if I meet—an acquaintance."

"Then you are expecting friends? How delightful! My sister and I made a tour two summers ago all through the Black Forest, and we were always meeting friends. Each day someone fresh turned up. Ah! you would have enjoyed that, Mr. Smith. It was just the expedition for an artist, and we fell in with several of your countrymen."

A strange light had come into the stranger's face as Hildegard spoke. For the first time since his arrival at Frau Brinkmann's he did not retire at once to his own room, but presently made his way to the salon, where the sisters Zoden were busy with their knitting.

It was a concert night, so that the salon was nearly deserted, and of its few inmates none were close enough to the young ladies to overhear Mr. Smith's conversation.

"Fraulein," he said earnestly to the elder, as though he deemed it etiquette to include

her in his request, "will you forgive me if I seem to force myself on your attention, and ask you if you can do me a great service?"

He was a poor artist, and wanted their help in disposing of his sketches. Hildegard felt certain of it. She only hoped Emilia would not snub him very much.

But Emilia was touched by the sad, despairing look of the handsome face—the face which should have been young and hopeful. She was not imaginative, but she felt instinctively she stood on the threshold of some sad story, and that Mr. Smith's confidence would be neither frivolous nor unbecoming.

"We will do our best, my Herr," she answered, cheerfully; "but, indeed, we have travelled about so much since our father's death that we have but little influence, even among our own people."

Paul smiled sadly.

"It was not your influence I was craving, Fraulein, but more your sympathy. Your sister mentioned at supper that two summers ago—that would be in '85—you were travelling in the Black Forest. My object in coming to Germany is to trace out a friend. I know that he also spent the whole of that summer travelling in Germany, and he was some weeks in the Black Forest. Might it not be that he was among the acquaintances that Fraulein Hildegard mentioned?"

"And have you quite lost sight of him?" demanded Emilia. "How long is it since you have seen him?"

"Six months. He was then in England at his own home. Fraulein, may I tell you the story? Will you keep my sad errand from becoming the theme of idle tongues?"

They both promised secrecy, and Paul continued. He was careful that while giving every clue that could arouse their interest he said nothing which could help them to identify the scene and characters of his romance.

"It was in September that my friend left his home. They have never heard a word of him since. His old father is broken-hearted, his mother seems turned to stone, his sisters are in despair. They begin to mourn for him as dead, and so I have come to Germany to try to find him."

"But," inquired Emilia, "why do you think he has come here?"

"Because my inquiries in London traced him to the docks. He was last seen on board a steamer bound for Hamburg. Then he had been very happy here. He had spent a year on the Continent (only returning last Easter), and I know he admired Germany. He had some skill as an artist, still more as a musician and linguist. I thought he might take to teaching as a means of livelihood, but I have now been in Germany four months, and I have found no clue."

"But you make no inquiries!"

"True, I feared people would say I was on a fool's errand, and perhaps think me demented; but when your sister spoke to me to-night I resolved to confide my secret to you, and ask your help."

Hildegard looked grave.

"But would your friend be willing to go home even if you found him? Surely he must have had some powerful reason to make him run away so strangely?"

"He had," he believed, here Paul's deep voice faltered, "that he had taken a human life. He was flying, as he believed, from the vengeance of the law. The injury he wrought was slight, and its victim soon recovered. At first he held his tongue, thinking my friend was only keeping out of the way until he knew of his recovery. Too late he discovered the poor fellow was actually gone."

"It sounds just like a story-book," said Hildegard, wiping her eyes.

"You must be a true friend to give up your time to the search," said the older sister; "but do you really think the unfortunate young man believes himself a murderer?"

"I am certain of it! You see my hands are tied. I cannot advertise in the agony

columns of the newspapers, for he would think it was a trap to decoy him to prison. I cannot confide in a detective. All that is left me is to wander about seeking him."

"But you might spend your whole life in the quest, and even then not succeed?" said Emilia, earnestly. "It seems to me a fruitless sacrifice."

"Not if I can restore him to his parents!"

"You must be very fond of him!"

Paul let the remark pass unchallenged.

"Do they know you have come?" asked Hildegard, "and that you are bent on finding their son?"

"No; they are fully persuaded that he is dead. And until I have good news for them I will not change their certainty for the agony of suspense. And now, Fraulein, will you tell me. Did you meet my friend on your pleasant tour in the Black Forest? I am not good at describing faces, but this photograph—it was done when we were college friends—is an excellent likeness."

The sisters took it eagerly, and did not keep him long in suspense.

"It's that friend of Mr. Gibson's we all liked so much," said Emilia. "What was his name? Do you remember it, Hildegard?"

"Val!" returned Hildegard, promptly; "because, when I first heard him called so, I wondered if it was his Christian name, and stood for Valentine. He had just left Oxford, and his father had sent him to see the world. He and Mr. Gibson were inseparable. I never saw one friend so much attached to the other as those two, and they were such a contrast."

"Indeed they were!" said Emilia, frankly. "Mr. Gibson was very nice; but his friend had the most charming manners I ever saw."

Paul was looking at the sisters with intense eagerness in his face.

"Do you think this Gibson was the kind of man a friend would turn to in trouble? Do you think when he took that ticket to Hamburg my poor Val could have meant to go to him?"

"I should think it was very likely. Mr. Gibson was not rich (very few people are in Germany), but he was a great deal thought of; and, though quite a young man, was already a professor at one of the small universities."

"Could you give me his address?"

"I cannot!" and Hildegard looked really grieved. "You see, though we were very friendly with him, we did not correspond."

"The Professors at the University might know," said Emilia, thoughtfully, "and one of our cousins is science-master there. If I gave you a line to him he might help you."

"A thousand thanks. You think, then, Mr. Gibson is sure to have left there?"

"I should say so. I know he wanted to improve his position, and his income at the University was very small; but as, of course, he must take recommendations from the Professors there, some one would be able to give you his address."

"Do you know," said Hildegard, eagerly, "Val saved Mr. Gibson's life. I don't know the particulars of it, but I heard it was something wonderfully brave."

Paul's grave, sad face lighted up, till the sisters thought it almost handsome.

"I shall never forget your kindness," he said, earnestly. "Do you know you have given me the first ray of hope I have had since—since last September?"

Emilia wrote the letter, which, in simple German phraseology, commended the worthy, well-born Mr. Smith to the care and friendly kindness of her well-beloved cousin, the Herr Doctor Zoden.

It was in Paul's keeping that very night, and by daylight the next morning he had left Frau Brinkmann's, promising his kind helpers to send them word how he succeeded in his mission.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was a long and weary journey, but Paul seemed incapable of fatigue. He felt now he was fairly on the track.

No ordeal could have been more terrible than the one he had gone through ever since Lord Glenval's disappearance; for he, and he alone, knew the true story of Royal's loss. He had kept it back from mistaken motives on first hearing of what people termed the St. Arvans' tragedy, and later on he felt it impossible that any one would credit him.

Paul Melville was innocent of the awful crime poor Jessie Campbell feared he had committed. But, none the less, his evil passions had led to the calamity which had well-nigh broken Lady St. Arvans' heart.

Angry at his fiancée's seeming flirtation with the young Viscount, Paul forgot that Jessie always accepted homage and attention eagerly, and was naturally flattered at notice from Lord Glenval, the hero of the night in whose honour the ball itself was given. Because she danced with Royal three times, and listened with pleasure to his conversation, Paul decided she intended to try to become Lady Glenval, and send him to the rightabout. Half mad with jealousy, he really fancied that the Viscount, who had the whole world before him from which to choose a bride, had stooped to court his (Paul's) one little ewe lamb.

Smarting with disappointment, jealousy, and wounded feeling, Paul escaped into the grounds before supper; and trying to find a secluded part where he could not be disturbed in his painful reflections, had strolled down to the river's edge.

Royal Glenval, perhaps bored by his mother's well-meant efforts to separate him from Jessie—perhaps honestly wishing for a breath of air after the fatigues of dancing—had also come into the grounds, and in an unlucky moment the two men met face to face.

The young Viscount, utterly unconscious of Paul's frame of mind (for his attention to Jessie had been of the simplest kind, with no thought of disturbing either her lover or his own father's sense of the fitting) came up with outstretched hand.

He had not met Paul before that evening near enough for conversation, and he was honestly glad for the chance of congratulating him on his engagement.

But the words died on his lips. To his utter amazement his hand was pushed aside, and Paul struck him a stinging blow in the face with his open hand.

"Melville, are you beside yourself?" "I had need to be," returned the other, with some bitter taunt about Lord Glenval's trying to supplant him with his betrothed.

Royal was not faultless. He kept his temper at first; but Paul's language grew more and more insulting, and finally he took off his light great coat and the dress coat beneath, and challenged Royal to fight—unless he was too cowardly!

The last taunt struck home. With one blow Lord Glenval felled his adversary to the ground. Paul uttered no sound, and lay perfectly motionless; the fall had stunned him. Royal Glenval knelt down and put his hand to his heart; he could not feel its beating. He tried to raise the arms, but they fell back stiff and heavy.

The awful certainty seized on Glenval that his comrade was dead, and he himself a murderer.

No thought of pleading the blow was struck in self-defence—no thought of urging the provocation he had received came to him. His one idea was that he had taken a man's life, and that his own would surely be required in expiation.

In little more than an hour Paul recovered consciousness. He felt intolerably stiff and bruised, his head ached badly, but there was no more serious injury.

He put on his light overcoat (his dress coat he could not find, and he would not wait to look for it), and walked out of the lodge gates, and so out of the St. Arvans' grounds.

A feeling of intense resentment against Royal filled his mind, not for the blow which he

felt he had provoked, but for his cold-blooded flight, going—as Paul imagined—quietly back to the ball to finish his amusement, and not caring whether his victim remained all night on the river bank.

Fortunately, he met a hired fly which had brought some late guests, and was going to put up at the hotel stables.

For a consideration the driver was very glad to take Paul into Warham, and deposited him not a hundred yards from his own door.

The story of Royal's disappearance burst on young Melville early the next day. His father and mother openly declared the Viscount had been murdered.

Paul's dress coat was identified by the Countess as her son's (it had come from the same tailor, and was of exactly the same pattern, size, and quality, so the blunder was a natural one, poor lady), and the river was being dragged for his body.

If only Paul had come forward then with the story of his interview with Lord Glenval, a world of pain might have been spared himself and others.

Two reasons kept him silent. He believed that Royal would see by the newspapers that he was the supposed sufferer by the catastrophe, and that his adversary was safe and well; and he was so irate with the young man for leaving him stretched unconscious on the ground without the slightest attempt to help him, that he really thought two or three days' suspense would be no undeserved punishment.

The other reason was a less selfish one. He could not bear to drag Jessie's name into the business, and he could hardly speak of his quarrel with Lord Glenval, and yet withhold the cause of their dispute.

But the delay had consequences more terrible than he could have imagined.

The St. Arvans family from the very first inclined to the opinion Royal was dead. They showed themselves intensely indignant if anyone, even hinted some trouble or difficulty might have caused his voluntary flight. In fact, they showed so plainly they preferred to think him dead rather than erring, that Paul simply could not bring himself to carry his story to the Castle.

He thought over it till thought became almost agony. He tried to assure himself he was not to blame, that Glenval had assaulted him cruelly, and then left him helpless and uncared for, and therefore he could not be held answerable for the young man's loss, but it would not do.

Paul had naturally a very clear judgment. He was, moreover, possessed of a very active conscience. His temper had led to the quarrel, and he had struck the first blow, and therefore he could not blame the young nobleman for defending himself.

By November the St. Arvans had put on mourning, closed the Castle, and ordered a tablet to be erected in the parish church to the memory of their son, and Paul awoke then to the truth—Royal Glenval had died, so fully impressed with the belief that he had committed murder, that he dared not even read the English newspapers. He was a fugitive upon the face of the earth, and a fugitive he would remain unless he, Paul, went to the rescue.

It was a hard struggle. Melville loved his chosen profession, and was anxious to complete his terms as soon as possible, and be called to the bar.

Then his wedding had always been talked of for the spring, and he cherished Jessie with every fibre of his heart.

To go away for an uncertain time meant placing a heavy drawback in the way of his career; but to go away from Jessie when everyone expected to hear their wedding day was fixed was torture.

The hesitation made him almost ill. On the one hand, his fiancée, his father and mother, his profession, all seemed to chain him to England, and no one could blame him if he stayed, since no one but himself knew his was the only

voice that would bring Lord Glenval back to Warham.

Why should he sacrifice himself and all those he loved, and start on what many would consider a wild-goose expedition?

But the right conquered, as in noble natures it always must.

Paul felt he could never enjoy his home—never look on his wife without remorse if he neglected the plain duty of bringing Lord Glenval back to St. Arvans. Surely a corpse would rest on him and Jessie if he preferred happiness to duty; and so, loving her as dearly as ever, he resolved to leave her.

He knew quite well when he left Warham his absence might last for months—ay, even for years—since he had no clue whatever to the place of Lord Glenval's flight, save that he had taken a ticket to Hamburg; and this one fact had cost an infinity of trouble and research to discover.

Indeed, but for the name "Val" having been used as a *non de plume* in Royal's college days Paul might never have identified the entry in the list of passengers, Mr. Val, Hamburg, to mean the name he sought.

He knew Lord Glenval had spent some months in Germany, and made many friends there, who had known him simply as "Mr. Val."

That he had gone to some of these Paul felt certain; but no clue rewarded his researches until he went to Fran Brinkmann's, and entered into conversation with the Zoden sisters.

He seemed another man after their information. It was all so clear. Of course, Lord Glenval was with his friend Mr. Gibson, and equally, of course, if the latter had left the university some one there would know his address.

In fancy Paul saw his wanderings happily ended, Royal restored by his means to home and family, and himself happily married to the girl he loved.

Dr. Zoden was at home, and proved most friendly to the bearer of his cousin's letter—indeed, he was so talkative that Paul had much difficulty in bringing the worthy man to the subject he had so much at heart.

"Could the Herr Doctor furnish him with the address of Mr. Robert Gibson? He desired to see him on business of great importance!"

"But, of course, I am his friend," replied the Doctor; "and, naturally, I know his address. I will send a letter to him for you willingly, sir."

"You are very kind; but I wanted to see him," said Paul, with almost feverish anxiety. "I could not put what I have to say in writing."

The Doctor looked at him searchingly. "Are you a friend of Gibson's?"

"I have never seen him in my life!"

"Then your business can hardly be of such a very private nature," said the Doctor, gravely. "And you could write it. I do not ask you to send a message by me. You can seal your letter, and I shall not look at it."

Paul saw he was not gaining ground.

"I am certain Mr. Gibson would see me," he returned, countenance; "but since you refuse me his address I must tell you the object of my seeing him. I am very much interested in a friend of his, a Mr. Val, whom I have lost sight of lately, and I believe Mr. Gibson could furnish me with his address."

Dr. Zoden looked interested.

"I have met the young man myself," he said, warmly, "and I never saw anyone more amiable and well-disposed. He was so simple and unaffected it was a treat to be with him, and his face was fit for a picture!"

"It was, indeed," said Paul, heartily. "Perhaps, sir, as you appreciate him so thoroughly, you may be able to tell me his address?"

Dr. Zoden evaded the question by asking another one.

"Are you a relative of his?"

"None in the world. We were at college together, and come from the same town."



[PAUL LAY PERFECTLY MOTIONLESS—THE FALL HAD STUNNED HIM!]

"Ah!" the Herr Doctor drew a breath of relief. "Then I may speak freely. It is needless for you to seek out Robert Gibson, for his poor young friend is dead!"

"Dead!"

Paul's heart seemed to stand still. Was this the reward of his self-denial—of his long and arduous task? Now that he was on the point of success to be met by that cruel, sharp answer—dead!

"You would like to hear about it?" said the Herr Doctor, who rather enjoyed having a melancholy story to relate. "As it happens I can give you every information, for Gibson, knowing I read English, sent me the papers over to spare himself the recital. He had obtained an excellent post as classical Professor, and as he was journeying to his duties he met poor Val. The young man seemed troubled and depressed; so Gibson, who has the kindest heart, begged him to go to his lodgings. He might, perhaps, find a post in the great school where he himself was engaged. Val agreed, and they set out. Picture it, my dear sir, the two friends so full of hope and confidence, setting out for a new home together!"

Paul fancied that one of the two had not been full of hope and confidence, but he saw no reason to say as much to the Doctor.

"Please go on. Tell me all you can."

"Willingly! There was a railway accident. It was in the old Bible words, one was taken and the other left. When the train was entered they were found locked in each other's arms. One was dead, the other stunned."

"You are quite sure?"

"Sure, my dear sir! It was in the paper!" said the Herr Doctor, with an inherent faith in anything he had seen in print. "It was a terrible shock to poor Gibson."

"Why? He was saved!"

"True; but he had a generous heart, and it troubled him sorely that he should have been saved, and his friend have perished. I had a letter from the Principal of the school

where he is employed, begging me to write and cheer him up, for he seemed quite morbid on the subject. I am not a good correspondent, but I did write, and promptly; and I got six lines in answer, begging me to bury the past, for it only made him miserable. He said he should never get over the shock of his friend's death; and he asked me as a special favour not to give any stranger his address, for if poor Val's relations heard of the disaster, and came to him with their questions and reproaches, he thought it would drive him mad!"

"He must be a strange man."

"A silent, reserved disposition, who opened his mind to few. I wrote again and received no answer, so I gathered he meant to break off all old friendships. I was hurt at first, I confess; but what would you? He is young, and has his life before him. The friendship of a German professor in an obscure country town could do little for him; he was right to drop it if he could. Someday he may come back and seek me out, and then I shall be ready to rejoice if success has come to him, to grieve if he has failed."

"I think you are much too good to him."

The Herr Doctor smiled.

"I am getting an old man, my friend, and time softens my judgments. Of course I cannot prevent your trying to find Gibson out, and questioning him about his comrade; but he can say no more than I have told you, and for my part I would urge you to let the matter drop. Nothing in the world can bring the dead to life."

Paul Melville took a courteous leave of the Herr Doctor, and went to the quiet hotel, where he meant to pass the night. He could not eat the supper he had ordered, though he drank off three cups of tea with feverish thirst. The very sight of solid food was loathsome to him, but he seemed as though his whole throat was dry and parched. Finally, early as it was, he went to bed, first

requesting that breakfast should be ready at seven, as he wished to catch the first train north.

He was called at half-past six. The breakfast waited on the table for an hour after the time named; then the good motherly hostess, fearing he must be ill, went and knocked at the stranger's door. No answer, again, and the same result, then really alarmed, she pushed the door open and went in.

The stranger lay tossing on his bed—a fever light in his eyes, two red spots in his cheeks. He was evidently light-headed. He saw the Frau Richmann, but did not seem surprised at her advent. He took no notice, indeed, of her, and kept on croning something to himself over and over again.

The Frau listened, and the raving being in German, she understood the sense of the sad lament.

"Nothing in the world can bring the dead to life—nothing in the world. And I drove him to it, therefore I am a murderer."

By ten o'clock the little town was ringing with the news, the handsome Englishman who arrived at Frau Richmann's the night before was dangerously ill with brain fever, and, if they might believe his ravings, he was a murderer!

And meanwhile, far away in England, the girl he loved wore his ring and prayed for him, feeling instinctively he was in trouble.

(To be continued.)

An Eastern dentist has successfully replanted four teeth in a boy's mouth. After replacing them in their natural position he braided them all together with heavy linen thread. Three weeks after he removed the support and found the teeth as firmly implanted as if they had never been knocked out.



["WILL YOU BE READY FOR ME WHEN I COME BACK TO CLAIM YOU?" TOM ASKED, HOLDING ALICE'S HAND.]

NOVELETTE.]

TRUE TO HER TROTH.

—30—

CHAPTER I.

TOM TALLINGTON was going away, and he was busy packing his things in his dim, dingy, dull lodging in Islington. Of course he lived at Islington. Most men of his position and means live in that refuge for the nearly destitute, in North London. That goes without saying.

Only if good, honest Tom had had his deserts, he should have changed places with one of the millionaires who live in Hyde Park Gardens, or Rutland Gate, or have stified in the old band-box houses that elbow each other in Mayfair.

As it was, not having his deserts, like many others among his fellow-creatures, he had to live in a narrow street in Islington, and occupy a couple of rooms that were let to him for the large sum of fifteen shillings a week.

They weren't nice rooms, and he wasn't at all sorry to leave them, to have the prospect of something bigger, broader, freer, and he was likely to have plenty of freedom; for he was going out to South America, to a rancho of a friend, who was willing to receive him as part partner, part employé, and equally willing to pocket the few hundreds Tallington was able to put into the concern.

But if Tom was not at all sorry to leave his stuffy, dingy rooms, and only a little sorry to leave England, still he was very sorry to leave a certain pair of blue eyes that were very dear to him—so uncommonly and extraordinarily dear that there was nothing he prized so much in the whole wide world.

If he could, had it been any way in his power, he would have taken the fair and treasured possessor of the blue eyes with him to the "Far West," and have carried a

remarkably light heart in his bosom by consequence thereof. But it was not by any means possible.

In the first place, he was poor, his sole worldly possessions consisting of a few hundreds he was to put into the rancho concern, three suits of clothes, a round dozen of boots, some hats, cravats, etc., a big portmanteau, a couple of iron-clamped boxes, a huge knife, a revolver and a colley dog. The latter was rather an inconvenient possession just then.

He did not want to take the Shah, as the dog was called, with him, and the only person with whom he would care to leave him was blue eyes, and she was poor as himself.

"What am I to do with you, old fellow?" he inquired of the animal, stopping for a moment in his occupation of cramming neckties, shirts, handkerchiefs, socks, etc., into his portmanteau in an utterly reckless, careless fashion, that threatened their immaculate appearance seriously. "I can't take you with me, and where shall I leave you?"

The dog looked up in his face, with a sad expression in his big, beautiful brown eyes, and whined a little.

"Want to come with me, eh?"

Thump! thump! went the great feathery tail in a swift movement of delight, and pleasurable anticipation.

"It isn't possible, old chap. 'Nohow,' as Tweedledum said, 'contrariwise.' I must leave you behind me."

The colley ceased thrashing the floor with his tail, and sat regarding his master with a dejected air.

"Now the question is, where?" continued Tom. "I wonder would she?" looking inquisitively across at the thick, clustering chimney stacks, as though he would ask the question of them, and expected to have a sensible, tangible answer. "Of course, of course," he cried, a moment later, a flush of delight and pride rising over his face. "How could I doubt her for a minute? As though

there is anything Alice would not do for me. I am a perfect brute to have doubted for a second. How would you like to go to Alice?" he went on, addressing himself again to the Shah, who got up at the mention of the lady's name, and capered about in a mad, boisterous fashion, that threatened ruin, utter and complete, to the extremely queer looking cows, and the dusty wax apples and pears that reposed on wool mats on a small side table, and were more eyesores than ornaments.

"You'd like it, you scamp, would you? Well, to tell the truth, so should I. Just fancy, Shah, you'll see her every day, all day long sometimes, and she'll feed you, and you'll lie on the mat outside her bedroom door at night. What happiness! I envy you, old fellow, no end!" concluded Tom, dolorously, as heaving a deep sigh he turned his attention once more to the collars and cuffs, and the portmanteau.

"Now we'll go round and see the lady of our mutual love, Shah," he observed, when at last, after prodigious efforts, the portmanteau was locked and strapped.

"Bow, wow," barked the dog approvingly.

"We'll go and see if she will look after you while your old master is away at the antipodes, slaving hard to make a fortune; and if she won't, old fellow—well, then I don't know what will happen," and putting on his hat he descended the stairs, his canine friend and companion following closely on his heels, and went out into the dusk and rawness of the early winter night.

He had not very far to go. A walk of ten or twelve minutes' length brought him to the door of the shabby-genteel house where his mother's sister and his cousin lived—this cousin blue-eyed, sweet-faced Alice Anson, the one woman in the whole world for him.

The usual slatternly lodging-house maid-of-all-work, a replica of one at his own local, answered his summons, and informed him that Mrs. Hanson and her darter were at 'ome.'

whereupon he lost no time in scaling the narrow dust-laden stair case, and making his way into the front drawing-room.

"Musa, Musce, the gods are at tea,
Musa, Musani, eating raspberry jam,"

he laughed, putting his head in at the door, and contemplating the scantily-furnished tea-table, that was by no means overlaid with dainties likely to produce a bilious attack and the necessity for a visit to the doctor; while the Shah strove to push his way in past his master's legs.

"We are at tea!" said Alice Anson, looking up at the intruder with a smile; "but we are not eating raspberry jam. However, I will get some out now that you have appeared on the scene."

"Don't," he said quickly, as he stooped down and imprinted a kiss on her cool, smooth cheek—a kiss that set his pulses off at a riotous rate, while it did not quicken hers by a single beat. "Bread-and-butter will do very well for me."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed his aunt. "What is quite enough for a pair of women certainly won't do for a man. You must have some of the jam. It is what Alice made specially for you last summer. And think, only think," she added, in an extremely lachrymose tone, for she was one of those highly inconvenient, and much-to-be-avoided females, who dissolve into tears on every possible occasion; "what a long, long time it will be before you taste it again!"

"Three years at most, I hope, Aunt Mary," he rejoined cheerfully, as he deposited hat and overcoat on the sofa, and drew a chair up to the table. "I shan't be able to get back before that."

"No, no, of course not! Certainly not," agreed Mrs. Anson at once.

"Do you think you will then, Tom?" inquired Alice, as she spread a piece of bread liberally with a delicious-looking crimson preserve, that was enough to give any one an appetite.

"I hope so, dear," he responded, turning his light eyes, a washed-out replica of her own beautiful orbs, on her in a very tender fashion, a fashion, however, of which she was delightfully unconscious.

"I think, by that time, if all goes well, that I shall have made a modest little pile, and be able to take a trip to old England, and have a peep at you both."

"Ah! if all goes well," groaned Mrs. Anson, in her usual fashion, taking a gloomy view of the affair. "But if it doesn't?"

"Well, if it doesn't it can't be helped," said her nephew, cheerily, as he demolished the bread and jam. "If Solis smashes I shall smash too, of course, and then the only course open will be to go as a railway-guard, or a hotel waiter, or a billiard-marker, or a cattle-driver, or something of that kind."

"How dreadful!" sighed his aunt, who clung to her vanished gentility with desperate energy, and instead of accepting her rather hard fate philosophically, spent her time in useless repinings after long bygone glories and luxuries.

Perhaps it was hardly to be wondered at that she felt her position bitterly, cooped up in two small rooms in Islington, with a hundred and twenty a year on which to support herself and her daughter.

The life was quite different from what she had been used to, for her father had been a gentleman farmer, and had owned a pretty farm in the pleasantest part of Sussex, near the breezy Downs, on whose green crests the sea breezes blew with invigorating freshness.

In this charming spot her youth had been passed, happily and innocently, without much amusement, save that which could be derived from riding, fishing, long country walks, superintending the poultry and the dairy, with an occasional croquet party, or tea-meeting, at which the young men and women of the neighbourhood were wont to congregate.

This was all very well, and life flowed on smoothly enough until she was twenty-one, until her elder sister, who had married some ten years before, and gone out with her husband to China, returned to England, and taking up her abode in London, asked her sister to come and stay with her.

This Mary was only too glad to do, for the monotonously, even quiet flow of life at Hurst Farm was wearying to a young person, and she looked forward with keen delight to a visit to town.

She went and enjoyed herself immensely, and was never tired of playing with her little nephew Tom, until another distraction appeared on the scene in the person of a rich, young, and well-favoured stockbroker, one Amarauld Anson by name, who was fascinated by the country girl's artless manners and fresh pink-and-white prettiness, so different from the artificiality of town belles.

Mary was equally well-pleased with her admirer, and after a rapid courtship she married him in an evil hour—in fact, ran away with him, as her father refused his consent to the marriage, and all her relations warned her against the man she had chosen, and about whom she was so madly infatuated. The infatuation did not long survive the marriage hour.

She soon found her husband was a giddy, shallow, good-for-nothing fellow, whose first thought and care were for himself, while as to money matters he was by no means particular, and was most reckless in his dealings on 'Change.

For three years they managed to get on with, at least, an outward show of good fellowship, for money was plentiful, and she could spend what she liked.

Then her little girl was born, and with maternity came anxiety for the future welfare of the child—anxiety her husband did not share—for he grew wilder and wilder in his speculations, and at last lost almost everything he possessed.

Then came a darker day for Mary Anson—a day the horror and shame of which she never forgot, when the body of her husband was brought back from the river, where he had sought a shameful death to escape from his embarrassments and difficulties.

There was nothing for Mary save twenty pounds a year, saved from the wreck of Amarauld's fortune, and on this she nearly starved for two years, with assistance from her sister, Mrs. Tallington, who, being poor herself, could not do much to help her.

Then her father died, and though he had been unrelenting in his anger against her during his life, he seemed to have relented so far as to leave a sum for her life, the interest of which amounted to one hundred pounds per annum.

But at her death it was to go from her to her brother John, a man more stern and unrelenting than her father.

Nothing was to go to Alice, the child of Amarauld Anson, the man Mr. Hurst had hated with true, old-fashioned British prejudice. It was this miserable fact that made Mrs. Anson so wretched.

There was nothing for her child beyond twenty pounds a year. It was impossible to save out of their wretchedly small income. It just sufficed to pay for their rooms, clothes, and food, and left a very, very small surplus for unforeseen expenses, and nothing at all for amusements, change of air, and that kind of thing.

Any little amusement they had enjoyed during the fourteen miserable years they had spent in the Islington rooms had come through Tom. It was, therefore, not astonishing that the widow should be in a more depressed and lachrymose state than usual on this the last night he would spend with them for at least three years.

They had so few visitors, so few friends, so few relatives, they would miss his cheery presence and enlivening tones sadly.

And then he seldom came empty-handed to

their rooms. In summer-time big and sweet-smelling were the bunches of flowers he would bring to decorate and brighten their dingy rooms; at Christmas he managed to send a well-filled hamper, and he never forgot their birthdays, giving always something useful as well as pretty.

Then he knew one or two actors, and occasionally got tickets for the upper circle, which were invariably given over to his aunt and cousin, whom he would conduct to the theatre in the modest 'bus, and see safely into their semi-genteel places; after which he would retire to the obscurity and lowliness of the pit, holding himself in readiness to escort them home again, and generally buying a lobster and a lettuce on the way, in order to ensure an invitation into the house, which, whatever its actual dirt, dinginess, and shabbiness, was a sort of paradise to him, because the girl he loved with all the ardour and intensity of his honest heart lived there.

That was all over. A blank faced both women, yet they could not grumble, could not object, because they knew he was going to America solely and wholly on their account.

He had given up the position he held of clerk in a bank at eighty pounds a year, and put all he possessed—the few hundreds that had come to him from his mother—into the ranch concern, because he believed he would soon double his capital—in fact, make a fortune—and be able to bestow luxuries and comforts on those that were dear to him. Do it in a legitimate, pleasant fashion, to himself, at any rate, for he meant to ask Alice to marry him as soon as he could command three hundred a year. That, he thought, would be absolute wealth to set up housekeeping.

He did not stop to ask himself if his cousin loved him, he took that for granted; and, of course, she did love him in a way, a mild, sisterly, grateful kind of way, but not at all as he loved her.

She was accustomed to him, had been from a baby.

Her earliest recollections were interwoven with Tom—Tom, who was a big strapping boy of twelve when she came into the world, a tiny, pink, blue-eyed mite, and she was very grateful to him for all the kindness he had shown her and her mother—kindness the true cause of which she never even guessed at, perhaps because she was quite free from vanity, and did not imagine, like so many girls do, that every man who looks at them, or is decently civil, is in love with them, and means matrimony.

Tom, though all attention, had not spoken openly of his passion.

He had hesitated to do so, for what right has a man to ask a woman to marry—or, rather, to starve with him, on eighty pounds a year?

None at all, he thought, and he had kept down and concealed his affection during the last five years. Only now that he was going away for years, now that the blue waters of the Atlantic would roll between him and his love, he determined to speak, to put his fate to the touch, and learn the best—or worst!

"Yes, that would be truly dreadful, Tom!" repeated Mrs. Anson, her first remark not having made much apparent effect on the others, "such—such low occupations!"

"Yes; a cowboy or a waiter can't be classed amongst the aristocrats. Still, over there," nodding towards the west, "there are not such class prejudices as there are here. Many a better fellow than myself has gone out there and driven pigs, lassoed mustangs, brushed crumbs off a table, whistled off a train, or scored up for billiard-players—many a nobleman's son, many an ex-dragon or lancer, fellows who strolled down Piccadilly and Pall Mall in the shiniest of hats, and the nattiest of coats, and immaculate patents—men not used to roughing it, not used to poverty, as I have been, and they have got on. Why should not I?"

"Why, indeed?" chimed in Alice, smiling, as she fed the Shah with dainty bits of bread-

and-butter. "You will be successful, I am sure, Tom, and nothing succeeds like success. Only, to begin with, there must be hard work, and you are a hard worker. No one can accuse you of idleness."

"Necessity, Alice," he laughingly replied, looking at her with all his heart in his eyes, and envying the dog, on whose great head her hand rested lightly. "If I could I'd be the idlest dog in the world!"

"I don't believe that," she told him, with sweet seriousness that was very charming. "You belie yourself!"

"Not at all. It is a fact, I assure you, that I should like to have my phaeton to drive and my horse to ride—to be able to keep my yacht at Cowes, to have a shooting-box in Scotland, my house boat at Henley. To be, in fact, one of the lazy members of the 'Upper Suckles,' to do nothing all day but amuse myself, and get through the time in the pleasantest possible way."

"You will have plenty of horses out there," she remarked, balancing a piece of sugar on the Shah's nose.

"Yes. Rather too many of them. I shall have to brush up my riding if I am expected to mount some of those half wild, badly-broken devils."

"And will you be expected to do that?"

"Why, yes, certainly. As partner in the concern I must be able to ride the animals that are to bring in the yellow boys."

"I do hope that it will be all right—turn out a lucrative investment for you," sighed Mrs. Anson, dimly.

"I hope so too. I've gone into the thing as well as I can, and unless Sellis is deceiving me abominably it should turn out well. He has started it, got a good stock together, only he wants a few hundred now to keep it going, and he admits me to partnership and half-share of profits on consideration of my giving him the sum that will enable him to carry the concern on. Nothing could be fairer."

"No, no. It seems very fair and promising. Only is he the sort of man you think you can trust? Is he strictly honourable?"

"I think he is the soul of honour," rejoined Tom, heartily, as having finished tea he pushed back his chair and went over to the fire where Alice was sitting on the hearthrug playing with the dog.

The firelight flickered on her face and her gray gown, revealing the golden tints in her hair, and the rounded outline of her girlish figure, and played about the sweet red mouth, and the starlike eyes! Tom thought she had never looked prettier, and a pain tugged at his heart, as he remembered the long, weary days that must be got through before he would see her again, listen to the glad some ring of her laughter, watch the mobile play of her lips, and the graceful gestures of her slender hands.

"Alice," he began, leaning one elbow on the mantelpiece, and looking down at her. "I want you to do something for me! Will you?"

"Of course I will," she responded, readily, not hesitating a moment, nor stopping to ask what it was he wanted done.

"You don't ask what it is?" he continued. "It may be something that you won't like doing at all."

"And what if it is?" she said, quickly. "You have done so much for me, shall I now refuse the first thing you ask me?"

"I hope you won't," he rejoined with equal quickness. "Nor some other favours I am going to plead for."

"Well, what is it?" she queried after a pause, as he remained silent, his eyes fixed speculatively on her face.

"The Shah," he began.

"Yes," stroking the dog's glossy head.

"I can't take him with me."

"Don't you mean to take him with you?" she asked, surprisedly.

"No. It would be an expense, and a trouble getting him across so many thousand

miles of sea and land, as I have to travel before I reach my destination, Sellis's rancho."

"Then what do you mean to do with him, dear old fellow?"

"Will you keep him for me, Alice, till I come back again?"

"Of course, I will, Tom, if you don't think he will be unhappy here."

"Why should he be?"

"We have only these two rooms, not much of a run for a large dog."

"Just what he has been accustomed to, dear. He will be right royally happy with you if only sometimes you will take him for a run in Finsbury Park."

"I can take him nearly every day."

"Then he will be delighted. That is settled, then?"

"Yes, Tom."

"And now, dear, there is something else I want you to take care of for me."

"What is that?"

"My heart, Alice," he replied sentimentally.

"What, Tom?" she queried in surprise.

"My heart, dearest. Don't you know I love you?" he went on, bending down towards her, for Mrs. Anson had followed the maid-of-all-work out of the room to superintend the washing of the tea-things, and the coast was clear for the lover to plead his cause, "that I have loved you always since you were a little rosebud mite toddling about, in a big blue sash and a white frock?"

"Yes, of—course—I know you love me," she replied, slowly. "Naturally you would. I am your cousin!"

"Yes; but my affection for you is not cousinly, Alice. It is something far deeper and stronger!"

"Is it?" she said, looking up at him with eyes full of innocent wonder.

"Yes. It is the love a man feels for the woman he wishes to make his wife."

"Oh, Tom!"

There was an accent almost of horror in her tone, and a painful scarlet blush leapt up to her face, and suffused it from brow to chin.

"Has it never occurred to you that I loved you in that way, Alice, my darling?" kneeling down on the rug at her side, and taking her hand between both his.

Her hand was very cold, and trembled a little in his clasp, and the flush receding left her deathly pale.

"No, Tom," she said, almost inaudibly, "it never occurred to me."

"How strange!" he exclaimed. "I should have thought that some of the warmth I feel must have communicated itself to you. For I do love you, Alice, most truly and deeply. The great desire of my life for the last five years has been to hear you say that some day you will be my wife. Is the hope a vain one, dear?"

For a full moment there was silence, niter and complete, while he studied the fair face half averted from him, and she gazed wistfully into the red depths of the fire.

"No, Tom," she said at last, speaking in her ordinary way with something of an effort.

"You will be my wife some day?" delighted accents.

"Yes."

"Oh, my darling! How can I thank you for this sweet assurance?" passing his arm round her waist, and drawing her somewhat unyielding form into his embrace. "I go to-morrow far, far away. I shall not see you for many a long day, and yet through all the hours of separation I shall be happy thinking, knowing that when I come back to claim you, you will be ready to become my wife, my beloved wife."

"Ah! Alice," he went on tenderly, pressing her against his breast, "you don't know what joy you have given me, how relieved I feel. I feared you might tell me that you only loved me in a cousinly fashion, and so could not be my wife."

"Did you, Tom?" she responded quietly, without any of a maiden's usual coy shyness

when she is being wooed, and keeping her head a little averted, so that he found it impossible to hold his cheek against hers as he wished to.

"Yes. Like a true lover I was fearful of not gaining my lady's favour. But now the clouds have lifted all is plain sailing. You have told me you will be my wife, and I know you will be true to your truth—that nothing will alter you, nothing change you, nothing make you false to me."

"No, Tom, I will be true to you," she assented, a little wistful ring in her tones that good Tom Tallington never noticed, and if he had noticed would never have understood, man like.

"It will give me energy to work—to succeed," he told her joyfully; "the thought that I am working for you, and that each pound I make will bring me nearer the goal, the desire of my life. What should I have done had you refused me, Alice, dearest?"

"I don't know," she replied, a trifle drearly, still staring intently at the fire.

"Neither do I. I think, though, that I should have gone to the dogs headlong—have become a drunkard, or a forger, a regular rascally fellow!"

"Oh! Tom, don't say such dreadful things!" exclaimed his cousin, raising one soft hand, and putting it over his mouth.

"I won't, darling, if you don't wish it," he murmured, kissing and mouthing the pink palm that was sealing his lips so pleasantly, in a fashion he liked.

"It is very wicked," she went on seriously, "and—and—it displeases me."

"Then I'll never say anything of the kind again, Alice," he declared very penitently. "My chief desire is not to pain but please you, sweetheart, and in this the first hour of our engagement I should be worse than a brute to do anything to wound and annoy you. Come, darling, give me a kiss and show me you forgive me," and drawing her closer to him he pressed his lips passionately to hers, and in his delicious delight did not notice the shudder that ran through her frame as he did so, nor how cold and irresponsive those pretty lips were.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning Tom Tallington set off early on the first stage of his voyage to the Far West.

Not alone and melancholy, however, was he. Far from it, for when Mrs. Anson had been told the exact state of affairs on the previous evening, and her blessing asked, and consent to the engagement of her daughter to her nephew bestowed, she not only gave it freely and fully, but declared that it was only right, as she was to be his mother in the future, that she and Alice should accompany him to the railway station, and see the last of him.

Indeed, so delighted was she at the state of affairs, that she even talked grandiloquently of going down to Liverpool to see him safely on board the ocean-going steamer that was to carry him to fortune, even if not to fame. This rather absurd idea was promptly knocked on the head by Alice, who would not entertain a thought of it, and Tom demurred a little to it also; for though nothing would have given him more pleasure than to have his betrothed with him a few hours longer, still, at the same time, he knew he would have to pay for their tickets, and the fare was heavy and his purse light, woefully light, and in the end the good lady was obliged to abandon her pet project, and to content herself with going to Euston, and shedding tears copiously as the hour of departure drew nigh.

Her sobs and wails made up for her daughter's impassiveness. Alice looked as white as a marble statue—she had not recovered her colour since her cousin's proposal frightened it away from her soft cheeks—and about as hard and unemotional.

It was fortunate for Tom Tallington that

he was not a person of very keen perception, or he would have infallibly noticed that there was a curious change in the fair Alice, a sort of shirking horridness, that she tried to hide behind an impassive and icy demeanour. It was as though she was holding down her feelings with an iron hand, and feared to let go, lest, if she once gave rein to them, they would master her, and inevitably make her disclose more than she wished to.

Tom, however, noticed nothing—that is, nothing different, nothing unpleasant. His ugly, honest face was beaming with smiles and pride. He strutted along by his *fiancée's* side with all the air of a lord and master, which was very ridiculous, as he did not much more than come up to her shoulder.

She looked like a slender young birch, erect, slight, graceful, aristocratic—he like a stunted pollard willow, stooped, sturdy, inelegant, *bourgeoisie*. But as he could not see the contrast between himself and his cousin, perhaps would not if he could, he was quite content and immensely well-pleased with himself and everything else on the earth, down to the smallest fly that lighted on his nose, and for a moment awoke him to mundane things as he swept it away with one dash of his hand.

"Alice, darling," he whispered, tenderly, when Mrs. Anson for the twentieth time stepped into the railway-carriage to count over Tom's numerous packages and parcels to assure herself that they were all right, and that none had been "lifted" by a member of the light-fingered "fraternity," "you won't forget me, will you?"

"No, Tom," she replied, very soberly and sedately, "I promise I won't forget you."

"And you'll be ready for me when I come back to claim you?" warmly pressing the shabbily-gloved hand that lay on his tweed coat sleeve with a butterfly touch, light as air.

"Yes, Tom," in cold, even tones.

"Won't you say, 'Tom, dear?'" he pleaded, passionately.

"Yes, Tom, dear," she repeated, mechanically.

"Thank you, darling," frantically squeezing the shabby glove again. "I've brought this for you," he added a moment later, drawing an insignificant little gold ring with "Mizpah" on it, from his waistcoat pocket. "I ran out and bought it this morning early. I didn't dare to buy it until I had your answer, your assurance that you would be my wife."

"Didn't you?" she murmured, and her voice sounded faint and far-away, even to herself.

"No. Take off your glove, and I'll put it on."

Obediently she drew off the old black kid glove, with its mended fingers and frayed edges, and held out her hand while he slipped it on the third finger, saying,—

"Don't take it off, Alice, until I send you a better one to replace it. Let it be a sign between us while I am far away—a talisman that will keep your heart and thoughts mine."

"Yes, Tom," she murmured again, staring at the little gold circlet that was the seal and pledge of this engagement which, to her, no matter what it was to him, was such a miserable farce, a painful shackle.

"As soon as I can afford it," he went on, jubilantly, "I'll send you the best diamond ring I can get, and then"—he whispered, stretching up so that his lips were near the pretty pink ear, and his hot breath fanned her pale cheek, "and then I'll come soon myself, and bring the one that will make you mine for ever—till death parts us."

To this she made no reply. A sort of horror held her silent, something which she could neither understand nor analyse. She only knew that she was intensely miserable, that a darker shadow had fallen over her hitherto not very happy life. That the future looked blank and dreary, and—that some day she would be Tom's wife!

Commonplace, good-natured, ugly Tom, who would have laid down his life for her if it would have benefited her by a hair's breadth, whose devotion and unselfish love she had been the recipient of as long as she could remember, to whom she owed any bright little gleams of sunshine that had fallen to her lot, of whom she had been so truly fond in a cool, cousinly fashion, and who now had spoiled it all by asking her to be his wife!

"Good-bye, darling! Heaven bless you! Good-bye, mother. Write often. Think how I shall long to have news of you both."

"Good-bye, Tom, my dear, dear boy! Heaven send you success, and a speedy and safe return," said Mrs. Anson.

"Good-bye," whispered Alice, and then the guard whistled, the engine shrieked, and the train moved slowly out of the station, and Tom was launched on his voyage that he hoped would bring so much to him—hope, love, fortune.

Well is it that we are blind sometimes, that we cannot lift the heavy veil that shrouds futurity, else perchance we dwellers on earth might be more sad and downhearted than we are, less hopeful, less joyous and enterprising?

The train was hardly out of sight when Mrs. Anson burst into a tirade that was a mixture of abuse and praise of her newly-departed son-in-law elect.

"So good of him to go. All for our sakes, my dear, you know, and yet I don't know how we shall get on without him. That I don't."

"We must manage somehow, mother."

"It is all very well for you to say that, Alice. You are young. You have the physical strength to face privations, the courage of youth, the untried, unbroken courage of youth. I am old, or at least," with a little weak, vain smile that sat queerly on her lined, faded visage, "I am getting on that way, and I don't feel as robust as I used to do, as well able to face hardships."

"Poor little mother!" said Alice, tenderly, drawing her mother's hand through her arm and stepping out bravely; for they were going to walk back from Euston to Islington and save the money Tom had given them to pay for a cab, to buy some extra dainty for dinner as a solace for his absence.

"You may well say that," sighed Mrs. Anson, diamally, hobbling along over the slippery pavements as a duck might on hot bricks, and hanging on to her daughter's arm with a tenacious grip. "I am poor, miserably poor, and I feel the want of the comforts money brings me more now than I ever did."

"Yes, I suppose so," said the girl, seriously, her pensive grey eyes fixed on a tiny rift in the dark clouds overhead that showed a streak of blue. "It is hard to want money for mere necessities as we do."

"Yes, and we shall want the necessities more than ever now that Tom has gone, not to speak of the luxuries he gave us. Dear fellow! How we shall miss him," declared the elder lady, warmly, thinking of the chickens he had been in the habit of bringing them, and the other edible dainties that helped their scantyarder.

"Yes," agreed Alice, thoughtfully, and yet do what she would she could not help feeling relieved that he had gone, that he was not there to play the part of adoring lover, to kiss her, to press her hands, to encircle her waist with his sturdy arm, to look love unutterable at her with those comical green eyes of his, that were so like a cat's, and so ill-calculated for sentimental glances.

She took herself to task severely for this. She felt, knew, that it was ungrateful, that it was not fair to this man, who, whatever his personal shortcomings, had been most unselfish in his devotion to her and her mother; and still she could not help the feeling of relief at his departure, for when has a ton of gratitude equalled an ounce of love in a woman's heart?

Had Alice loved Tom Tallington, as a

woman should love a man to whom she has pledged her faith, whose wife she has promised to become, his going would have been a pain of grief to her, his return a pleasure of joy.

But in her case the contrary held. His departure was a relief; his return, even at a distance of three or five years, she contemplated only with a shudder.

Be it understood distinctly, that this was only since he proposed. Before that eventful episode she had regarded him with something more than cousinly love, it is true; but it was only the calm, equable love a fond sister might entertain for a dear brother, not that warmer, more passionate devotion which a woman usually feels for her lover, the chosen one of her heart, her other self, as it were, with whom her whole being can intermingle, with whom she can exchange thoughts and ideas, who, in fact, is her all in all!

Tom was never likely to be that to his cousin. In Alice Anson's nature there was a strong vein of sentimentality, and a decided liking for the beautiful.

She would grow enthusiastic over a pretty face, even when it was a flesh and blood one, and not lined on canvas by an artist's hand. She liked handsome horses, beautiful dogs, fair landscapes, statuary, anything that was pleasing to the eye and an artistic temperament, and poor Tom was neither beautiful nor artistic.

It would, perhaps, have been difficult to find a more commonplace young man as to appearance—indeed, it bordered on the ridiculous.

For his face was red, of a vivid bucolic red, the deepest tint of which centred in his ridiculous little snub of a nose that had an unsentimental, heavenward tilt; his hair was sandy and rebellious, and being out very short bristled over his head, bottle-brush fashion; his eyes were too awfully green, and his figure anything but redeemed his face, being short and squat, and sturdily ungraceful.

Despite his not being an Adonis and Apollo rolled into one, Alice found she missed him very much as the short, dreary winter days rolled on, their monotony and dullness unbroken, save by the fretful repinings of Mrs. Anson, who not having the strength of mind to wait courageously for the good time that was to come, bewailed bitterly the bad time that was, and wrapped in a big shawl, sat huddled up near a scrap of fire in the grate trying to keep herself warm.

During those dark and unhappy days Alice conceived the idea of adding to their scanty income by teaching, and after many disappointments, and a considerable expenditure of time, patience, and shoe leather, she obtained the unenviable post of instructress to the six unlicked cubs of a Holloway pork butcher.

They were sad specimens of humanity, with nothing pleasant or winning about them, and possessed the smallest modicum of brains possible to get along with, and escaped being idiots by the skin of their teeth.

It was heartbreaking work teaching them; still Alice stuck to it bravely, for it brought in a few shillings weekly, and above all it kept her mind occupied, and her thoughts from dwelling on that unpleasant thing, her marriage with Tom Tallington.

Mrs. Anson, at first, was dreadfully shocked and put out at her daughter instructing the offspring of a vendor of pork; but after a time she got over it, and accepted the situation with a certain amount of stoicism, more especially as Tom did not seem to be coining gold with marvellous rapidity, and declared himself frankly unable to send them much, as things at Sellis's were not "looking up."

His aunt groaned at every fresh letter that arrived containing accounts of how they could only just make the thing pay, and expressed a hope that he would come back soon, give up horses and ranching, and take once more to the pen and the desk, the sober sobriety of an office in the city.

CHAPTER III.

THE three years passed away, and Tom had not returned. Only as the fourth year of his exile began, he wrote more hopeful letters. Things were "looking up" at last, and what was better, Mrs. Anson thought, he sent over little remittances which were found to be rather more than useful, especially as that winter Mary Anson fell ill with bronchitis, and did not get well through the short, dark days that followed Christmas.

Of course Alice, who wrote regularly every fortnight to Tom, told him of her mother's illness; and Mrs. Anson, when she was well enough to do so, scrawled a few pitiful lines to him herself, telling a tale of misery and ungratified longing, the intense pathos of which she was quite unconscious of.

The result was that one bright April morning the postman brought her a registered letter, bearing the postmark of the town nearest to where Tom was located; and when she opened it she found therein bank-notes to the amount of thirty pounds, and a letter from Tom telling her that she must get away to the seaside at once, and that she was not to scruple or hesitate for an instant about using the money, as he and his partner had suddenly "struck it," and were making money instead of losing it as heretofore, and that more would be forthcoming when that was expended.

The invalid was almost beside herself with delight at the prospect of once more beholding the ocean, with its boundless stretch of blue tossing waters.

It was half-a-score of years and more since her eyes had been gladdened with a sight of it, since she had breathed the pure, exhilarating sea-air, had watched the surf roar and totem on the strand, the gulls wheel overhead, the sunlight gleam and glint on sea and land.

An afternoon on Hampstead Heath, an excursion to Richmond, Kew, or Hadley Wood, had been the extent of her visits to the country. It is not therefore difficult to picture the state of excitement she was in, and how hard she found it to wait until Alice came in to communicate to her the good news—Alice, who was paying her last visit to the Holloway pork-butcher's establishment, having received notice of dismissal from the proud position of instructor to the unlicked cub.

"Alice, Alice, come here!" shrieked Mrs. Anson, the moment her daughter opened the door, flourishing the letter she had received about in a wild fashion.

"My dear mother! What is the matter?" inquired the girl, advancing rapidly to the couch on which the elder woman lay with a look of consternation on her face, as she noted the flush on the invalid's face, the feverish sparkle of her eyes.

"Nothing is the matter," replied the mother, joyously. "Only I have good news; and such good news, Alice!"

"What is it, dear?" queried the girl, taking off her shabby black hat and tossing it on a chair, for the morning was hot, and in the narrow streets through which she had walked the warmth was stifling after the chill bracing east breezes of winter.

"Look, look!" and the invalid thrust the banknotes into her hands.

"Are these from Tom?" inquired the daughter, after a momentary pause, during which the faint pink flush called to her cheek by exercise died away, leaving her very pale.

"Yes. He has sent them for me to go away—to go to the seaside. Isn't he good? Isn't he kind? The dear, dear generous fellow!" cooed Mrs. Anson, delightedly.

"He is more than good—more than kind," replied Alice with unwonted gravity. "But perhaps," hesitating a little, "he cannot really afford to send so much. It is a large sum—thirty pounds!"

"It is. Only he can afford, my dear!"

"How, mother?" lifting the beautiful grey eyes, that wore a more pensive look than of yore.

"He is getting on much better—indeed, is in a fair way to make a fortune rapidly. Isn't it delightful to think of? We shall be comfortable at last. Are you not glad, my dear?" and she settled herself back comfortably amongst her pillows, a contented smile irradiating her wan face.

"Yes, mother. I am glad he is getting on well!" said Alice, but there was no heartiness in her tone, and even as she spoke she sighed heavily, and a deeper shadow fell across her face, for she knew that when he became wealthy, or at any rate well-to-do, that he would come back to England, and claim the fulfilment of her promise—the promise she had given him, not through love—that sweetest and best of all reasons—but from gratitude, the sense of obligations that could never be returned.

"He will be coming back soon to England if all goes well!" continued Mrs. Anson, beamingly, unconsciously pursuing the same train of thought as her daughter.

"Yes," rejoined Alice, shortly. "Where will you go to, mother?" she added a minute later, wishing to change the conversation.

"I don't know. Where shall we?"

"You had better choose a place that you think you will like."

"All places are much the same to me, dear. I shall enjoy any country place. Only, of course, we must choose a cheap place!"

"I think most seaside places will be cheap at this time of year."

"Perhaps. Only some are more fashionable than others."

Of course. You don't want to encounter the fatigue of a long railway journey, do you?"

"No; nor the expense of it either."

"Then I think Hurstcombe ought to suit us admirably. Mrs. Pritchard speaks highly of it, and, of course, she would not go there with her large family unless everything was moderate in price."

"No, of course not!"

"Well, shall we decide upon Hurstcombe?"

"Yes, dear!"

And so to Hurstcombe they went some ten days later, both full of pleasant anticipations, and ready to enjoy their holiday.

It was a charming town on the Kentish coast, with several and varied attractions.

On one cliff were stately terraces and big mansions, on the other cottages and small villas; and below, nestling beneath the cliff, was the quaint old part of the town that bore the ineffaceable hallmark of bygone times in its narrow streets, gabled, red-roofed houses, and many-paned windows.

Near was a stretch of golden sand, where the fisherfolk and seafaring men, who inhabited these old places, dried their nets, left their boats high and dry, and stowed their creels and lobster pots.

Further on, near the more fashionable and modern part, the beach consisted of many-hued stones, worn round and smooth by the ceaseless action of the waves.

Just behind the beach, running along the foot of the cliffs, was a road, which was a mass of verdure and trees, while the emerald turf ran down almost to the emerald waves, and was a pleasant relief to the eye.

This road gradually inclined upwards until it reached the crest of the cliffs, from whence a splendid view of the channel—and, on a fine, clear day, of the coast of France—could be obtained seaward, and of the undulating line of grass-clad hills that encircled Hurstcombe on three sides landward.

Between the town and the hills lay a succession of fertile meadows and productive fields, hedged with wild-rose bushes, black-berry, ivy, elder flowers, and may, with here and there a rustic farmhouse, liberally white-washed and thatched, with barns, and granaries, and outhouses, and a variety of live stock, such as pigs, cows, fowls, &c.

The place boasted two piers as well as its natural attractions; one that ran out a little way and then curved in on the east side was

a quaint old structure, whose hoary, weather-beaten piles were said to have been driven in in the reign of the maiden queen, long, long ago; the other, on the west side, was of the modern modernish.

It was profusely decorated, lighted by electricity, and boasted a pavilion and theatre at its extremity, where wishy-washy performances were given by fourth-rate actors to an unappreciative and small audience.

After indulging in the extravagance of a fly to drive about in and prospect, Mrs. Anson and her daughter took rooms in a cottage on the east side, a cottage that possessed a gabled, thatched roof, and a green porch, and a number of queer chimney-stacks, and was surrounded by a pretty garden, already bright with late primroses, and early bluebells, tulips, narcissus, and some other hardy blooms, and from the windows of which a good sea-view could be obtained.

A pleasant, clean-looking woman attended on them, and they soon found and felt themselves more at home than ever they had been in their dingy Islington lodgings, amid the gloom and grime of London town.

"You look a little better already, mother!" said Alice the next morning, as they sat on the beach, the elder woman wrapped in a shawl, and propped up with a pillow, the Shah stretched out beside them at full length, basking in the genial sunrays.

"I feel a little better," rejoined Mrs. Anson quite briskly. "It is such a complete change from London. The air is so pure and exhilarating, one can't but feel brighter and happier here!"

"I hope you will get quite strong soon!"

"I am sure I shall! I should never have got well if we had remained in town. I was dying for a breath of the sea air! Ten years since I've had it, Alice; ten years, fancy! I, who was born and bred on the Sussex downs in sight of the dear old ocean! Ah! Fate is hard on us sometimes!" and she sighed heavily.

"It is, mother. Only we must be happy now—make the most of the two months that lie before us now."

"Yes; and we have to thank Tom! dear, generous Tom!"

"Yes," and though a moment before Alice had counselled her mother to be happy, a shade fell over the brightness of her winsome face, and the corners of her mobile mouth drooped pensively.

"If we only had a few more friends like him!"

"We could hardly expect that, mother."

"No, my dear; you are right. There are very few people as good and unselfish as your cousin! I am sure you know that as well as I do!"

"Yes, mother," she assented readily enough; still she was by no means displeased that just at that minute Mrs. Pritchard sauntered up with half a dozen of her numerous progeny, and a young sister, whose skittishness she was doing her best to try and tone down by sage advice, which, alas, went in at one of the sixteen-year-old maiden's ears and out at the other, and left her just as empty-pated, frivolous, and giddy as ever.

"Well, how do you like Hurstcombe?" inquired the stout matron, as she seated herself on the nobbly stones beside her friend, and ordered the children off to dig and play as they listed.

"It is a charming place!" rejoined Mrs. Anson, with an ecstatic sigh.

"I'm glad you like it. I grow fonder of it every time I come here," declared Mrs. Pritchard.

"I don't," put in Miss Gill, the skittish sister, with a decided air of discontent. "May be all very well in the season, some fun going on, but now it is deadly dull. Why, there isn't a man to be seen anywhere!" she cried, with a comprehensive glance around, that took in earth and sea and sky in one grand total.

"Oh, men! Bother the men! You're

always thinking of them!" rejoined her sister, with good natured scorn.

"So were you before you married," retorted Miss Elizabeth perky. "Only I suppose you've had enough of it now that you've got eleven children."

"Perhaps I have, and perhaps I haven't," retorted Mrs. Pritchard, with a portentous snort of indignation.

"Don't you call those men?" inquired Alice with a smile, looking at some elderly and rheumatic sailors who were pottering about in the sunshine with the help of thick sticks.

"No. They are only things," rejoined the skittish one, with the utmost contempt. "I haven't seen a fellow worth looking at down here, except one!"

"One is better than none at all," said Alice, laughing outright.

"This one is!" agreed Elizabeth Gill, screwing up one eye into a knowing, if vulgar, wink.

"Is he an Adonis?"

"Perfect! Awfully handsome, awfully rich, awfully nice altogether in every way."

"How do you know he is?" queried Mrs. Pritchard sharply, for she had her misgivings in regard to this frisky sister, a score of years her junior, "and how do you know he is rich, I should like to know?"

"Wouldn't he be staying at the Caravansari Hotel if he weren't, you bet," rejoined Elizabeth, laconically.

"That's no criterion of wealth."

"Yes it is. Only rich swells stay there," declared Miss Gill, with perfect conviction. "If they are poor swells, or want to be thought swell, they stay at other hotels where they don't fleece them quite as much as they do at the Caravansari."

"You seem to know all about it," remarked the mother of eleven, with a decided air of dissatisfaction.

"Of course I do," rejoined the skittish one, perkily, with a toss of her pretty empty pate. "And talk of angels, etc., there he comes, sick baby brother, valet and all."

Alice's eyes involuntarily followed Elizabeth's, and she saw a tall, fair man, with a blonde beard, and golden moustache and hair come out of the hotel, followed by a dapper, clean-shaven foreigner, who bore in his arms a little child, a boy who looked about four at the outside.

His face was very pale, his whole aspect delicate and fragile in the extreme, and his long flaxen curls floated over the attendant's arm on which his pretty head rested. He seemed to be very weak and helpless, for he was placed in the fair man's arms, while a waiter from the hotel and the foreign valet spread out the soft cushions and rugs on which he was to recline.

When they were comfortably arranged he was gently placed on them, his back supported by half-a-dozen pillows built up artistically into a comfortable support. His big straw hat, with its snowy muslin scarf, was adjusted at the right angle to shade his eyes from the sun; a pile of books was placed alongside, and the fair man man, throwing himself down near, pulled a paper out of his pocket, and began to peruse it, while the attendant withdrew, leaving the two, who from their resemblance were evidently relations, alone together.

"Isn't he an awfully pretty boy?" exclaimed Elizabeth, rapturously. "What lovely hair, and don't I just wish my skin was as white and fine as his! I give anything to have mine like that!"

"Pooh, Lizzie!" reproved her sister. "You oughtn't to say that!"

"Why not?"

"Because it's only ill health that makes it white like that. Poor creature, he can hardly move his hands or feet. He can't walk, or ride, or play, or enjoy anything like other children; and then you are foolish, wicked enough to say that you'd give anything to be like him!"

"Only so far as the complexion is concerned," retorted Elizabeth, coldly. "I like to be able to use my legs freely," and she kicked at her fluffed petticoats vigorously, to emphasise her remark.

"It is wrong of you," declared the matron, with a solemn frown.

"I don't care if it is!" retorted sixteen-year-old, testily.

"It will bring down a punishment on your head," continued Mrs. Pritchard, "and you'll deserve it."

"Oh, rubbish!" replied Miss Gill, with concentrated scorn and contempt. "How can you be such a fool, Maria? At your age you ought to know better!"

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Mrs. Pritchard, indignantly, who, not being very high-bred or very aristocratic, occasionally, like her sister, indulged in forms of speech that are usually heard in the servants' hall. "No, I never did. Never!"

"Don't you think he's lovely?" continued Elizabeth, serenely, of Alice, nodding her head in the direction of the interesting stranger.

"Yes. Too pretty for a boy."

"Oh, I don't mean the boy. I mean the man."

"His father, I suppose?" suggested Alice, for there looked a considerable difference between the two.

"No. His brother. Of course, he is much older than the cripple," with a sage dip of her pretty, pert head. "That goes without saying, though they are so much alike. Regular Swedes, aren't they?"

"Do they come from Sweden?" said Alice, who felt a strange interest in the poor, pale, pretty child, and his great, strong, handsome brother, who, with his fair beard, tanned skin and gigantic stature, looked a fit representative of those Vikings of old, who sailed down from their cold, ice-bound North Seas to ravage Britain, and slay and pillage the half-helpless Saxon, ensconced by constant wars with his neighbours, the Picts and Scots.

"Yes, Stockholm."

"And how, in the name of wonder, do you know all this, Elizabeth, about complete strangers?" broke in Mrs. Pritchard, wrathfully, her ample figure quivering with righteous indignation like an animated jelly, her round, red, jolly face purple with suppressed with anger that she knew, alas! from sad experience, it was worse than useless to give voice to.

"Nurse's sister is chambermaid at the Caravansari, Maria, and that's how I know it. I haven't been speaking to the Swede himself and asking to hear all his history, if that's what you mean by your thundery looks and red face. Picking him up! Isn't that what you call it?" with a quiet insolence that acted as a cold douche upon the matron's red-hot wrath.

"No. I don't suppose he would speak to you," rejoined Mrs. Pritchard, with more sarcasm and contempt than her usual un-failing good nature allowed her to use, even towards this tormenting and unregenerate younger member. "Only I thought it possible you might have scraped acquaintance with the valet just to gratify and satisfy that abominable curiosity which is one of your worst faults."

"You are an old cat," said Elizabeth, deliberately glaring at her sister, "a spiteful old cat, and the older you get the worse you become! You're jealous of me because I'm young and good-looking, that's what it is; and I don't care a fig what you think. Do you hear? Not a fig. So there!"

"I'll send you back to your father, miss, if you don't behave and keep a civil tongue in your head," threatened the sorely tried mother of eleven.

"No, you won't," snapped the other. "Father's paid you too well for you to do that. If you send me back you'll have to send the money as well, and you can't do

that, I know," concluded Elizabeth, triumphantly.

"Come and take a stroll," put in Alice, hurriedly, pitying poor Mrs. Pritchard's looks of mortification and shame, though she did not particularly like Miss Gill or affect her society. "There is some beautiful seaweed down there where the children are digging."

"Oh, yes, let us go and get some!" cried the girl, jumping up at once and commencing to walk down to the sea.

Alice followed more leisurely, but soon caught up Elizabeth, for that skittish person began to loiter and walk slowly when she got near the Swedes.

"Isn't Sigismunde Swende handsome, adorable?" she whispered, as Alice joined her.

"Which is that?" she asked, in a low tone.

"The big one. The little one's name is Sigvald. Queer names, aren't they?"

"I like them," said Miss Anson, thoughtfully. "They have a quaint, old-world ring about them that—"

"That makes you think of Kingsley's 'Hereward,' eh?" interrupted her companion, quickly.

"Yes," assented Alice, and they walked on in silence, catching a word or two exchanged by the brothers in a strange, unfamiliar tongue as they passed them.

Alice was looking at the child, an expression of divine pity on her beautiful face. She did not therefore see that Sigismunde Swende's blue eyes were riveted on her, and remained on her while she was in sight. Then he went back to his paper, and he tried to read; but, somehow or other, between his eyes and the print came ever and anon a sweet, serious face, with a frame of yellow hair, and the most beautiful grey orbs in the world.

CHAPTER IV.

THE hot spring sun was heating down with quite summerlike fierceness a few days later, as Alice sauntered slowly through the little garden that lay before the cottage.

She was in no hurry, and she always loved to linger there, amid the scent of the wall-flowers and mignonette, to watch the Solomon's-seal wave its fragile bells in the wind, and the early lilies hold up their stately heads, while here and there, in a damp corner sheltered from the sun, she could see a little knot of late lingering primroses, and a few bluebells, that the wild pinkie, translated from the woods behind Hurstcombe to the cottage garden, were fast elbowing out the way.

Was it any wonder that she lingered in that sweet spot to look at the many-coloured flowers, to listen to the lark's soul-inspiring lay, as he soared heavenward in the blue ether above, or the cuckoo's cry that was borne faintly to her on the wings of the wind, to watch the glint and gleam of the sun, as it rested on the waves, and at each undulation of the water broke into a million diamond-bright sparkles, making a glittering pathway fit for fairy feet, right away to the coast of France?

Was it any wonder that she should like to feast her eyes on the beauty of colouring and form that nature spread before her with bountiful hand—she who had been penned up in London ten long years, without one glimpse of that grand sweep of tossing waters?

It was all so different from what she had been accustomed to—such a change from the endless rows of streets, the dusky bricks-and-mortar of North London.

What wonder that she steeped her senses in the sweet sights and sounds around her?—watched a butterfly sweep by with the eagerness of a child, or watched the fishing smacks tack and turn with keen interest?

She buried her face in a great clump of golden-hued wallflowers, picked a spray and tucked it in to the bosom of her blue-velvet gown, and then stopping at the gate threw a glance back at the little white green-porched house, where her mother sat at one of the open

windows dozing away these delicious hours of idleness and repose.

"Isn't it delightful, Shah?" she said, smiling down at the dog, who was sitting at her feet, snapping at the flies that came within reach of his great jaws. "Don't you enjoy it? I do. Now don't bark," reproving a restless movement with a wave of her pretty pink hand. "That will never do. It would wake the mater, and some day we shall have to leave it all and go back to dingy London. But," with a half-smothered sigh, "we won't think of that dreadful time, will we, old man? No, we'll be sensible and enjoy ourselves while we can. Come," and opening the gate she went out, and strolled leisurely towards the beach, where she seated herself; and tossing down the book she had brought gave herself up to the delight of watching the changeable, brilliant ocean, and the crafts that glided over its placid bosom, from the homely smack to the gay yacht, with its pennon flying out on the breeze, whipping and thrashing space, emblematically.

She had not been there very long when her meditations were interrupted by Elizabeth Gill, who seated herself beside her, and began at once about the Swedes, who formed the staple topic of conversation with her.

"Sigismunde has just gone out riding," she informed Alice, in her usual cool, familiar way, "and that wretch of a Frenchman, Javrier, has brought that poor boy out and left him alone on the beach. Isn't he a brute?"

"Perhaps he has gone to the hotel to fetch something?" suggested Alice, who was always ready to excuse bad conduct in others, though never in herself.

"He's been an uncommon long time about it, then, if he has. It's nearly an hour ago since he left the child."

"Poor little fellow," ejaculated Miss Anson, in pitying tones.

"Yes, indeed, poor little fellow. He may want something. May be thirsty. That French frog wouldn't dare to leave him if Mr. Svende had not gone out! I shall go and ask him if he wants anything," she declared a moment later, jumping up.

"Oh, you had better not do that, and perhaps he does not speak English, and won't understand you."

"Oh, yes he can."

"How do you know?"

"He was playing with a cup and ball the other day, and the ball got beyond his reach, and I got it for him, and then we had a little chat. He speaks English very well, with only the least little bit of accent in the world; and when I told him he did, he said it was no wonder, for his mother was an Englishwoman, and so that he was half English."

"I see," said Alice, watching the giddy girl as she danced off, and dropped on her knees beside the boy, who lifted his head, and seemed to welcome her coming warmly.

The Shah presently got up and went after her, probably scenting cakes or sugar, for Elizabeth often had her pockets crammed with goodies which she used to give him if he begged or held out his paw to be shaken.

The dog was soon requisitioned, and Alice heard the mingled laughter of the two at his cumbersome antics; only when he fell over with his legs on the child's chest she thought it time to interfere.

"Lie down, Shah!" she exclaimed. "I hope he didn't hurt you?" she added, smiling down at the little invalid.

"Not—not at all!" replied the boy, smiling, "and I do like to see him sit up. Please don't take him away, I joy it so!"

"I won't take him away," said Alice, quickly, a thrill of sweet compassion running through her whole being, "only I don't want him to fall on you. He is so heavy he may hurt you. I will make him lean against me, then he won't fall," and kneeling down on the beach by the side of the little invalid's impromptu couch, she made the great fellow sit up on his haunches, supporting him the

while, and Elizabeth put bits of sugar and biscuit on his nose, and at a given signal he tossed them up and caught them in his great jaws, to the intense delight of little Sigvald, who shrieked with delight, and clapped his tiny hands feebly.

When the merriment was at its height, and the three were engrossed with the Shah's antics, a voice suddenly exclaimed,—

"My dear Sigvald, where is Favrier?"

Marian and Elizabeth, turning quickly, saw Sigismunde Svende, still in his riding-dress, with a hunting-whip in his hand.

"I don't know where he is," rejoined the boy, adding a few words in Swedish, which were, of course, unintelligible to the girls.

"I saw him go into the Shades of the Caravanseri an hour ago," announced the irrepressible Elizabeth, fiercely.

"It is unpardonable of him to have left the child!" murmured the Swede, with vexation. "I fear my brother has been trespassing on your time and good nature," he added to Alice, letting his eyes dwell on her fair face, which was covered with blushes.

"Not at all," she managed to murmur.

"The dog seemed to amuse him!"

"Isn't he a splendid fellow, Munde?" cried the boy. "I should so much like to have him."

"No doubt. Possibly this lady is not so eager to part with him!" smiled the elder brother.

"He is not mine," said Alice, eagerly. "I am taking care of him for a cousin who is abroad."

"What a pity!" exclaimed Sigvald, dolefully. "If he had been yours you might have given him to me!"

"A cool remark, my boy!" laughed Svende.

"He has amused me so much all the afternoon," said the child, wistfully.

"A new toy, and a living one. Certainly, I have not heard you laugh so much for a long time—not since your illness," remarked the young man. "Please accept my thanks, ma'mselle, for the happiness you have been the means of procuring my brother," with a bow to Alice, full of courtly grace.

"I am very glad the dog amused him," said Alice, who was recovering a little from her embarrassment. "I was afraid the excitement might make him ill."

"No, poor little chap. He hasn't much amusements, so it would only have a beneficial effect on him. He would have been utterly wretched alone. I am, therefore, greatly indebted to you, and to you, ma'mselle," with another bow to Elizabeth, who smirked and smiled, and bridled like a peahen in the sun. "I see Favrier is not to be trusted. None of these attendants are. I very seldom leave my brother"—Alice knew this well from her own observations and what Elizabeth had told her, she saw how entirely he devoted himself to the poor little invalid—"but whenever I do something is sure to happen. I always fear a serious accident. Will you believe it, ma'mselle, this is the sixth attendant I have had for Sigvald in a year?"

"Really? That speaks badly for them!"

"It does truly. I hardly know what to do," he added, perplexedly, a bewildered look crossing his fair, handsome face. "Favrier I must dismiss. It is most dishonourable on his part to leave the child the moment I go away. He is evidently not to be trusted, and I always make it a settled affair that they must go if they leave him alone in my absence."

"The best arrangement to make!" agreed Alice.

"Do you mean to send him away to-day?" inquired Elizabeth, delighted at having an opportunity of speaking to this handsome stranger, whom she had invested with all sorts of romantic attributes.

"But, yes, ma'mselle. He has been untrue to his trust. I can no longer put faith in him. He goes at once!" The sunny blue eyes grew steely and hard, only to soften as they fell on

the little helpless atom of mortality stretched at his feet. "I would not trust Sigvald in his charge again for the world."

"Then how will you manage with him?" inquired the girl more seriously than usual, also looking at the child.

"I hardly know," returned Svende, uncertainly, the cloudy, perplexed look deepening in his eyes. "I must try and get one of the maids at the Caravanseri to take pity on him, and put him to bed."

"I know!" exclaimed the skittish one, who, though light of brain, was good at heart, "I know! Our nurse will see to him if you like. She's a good old soul, and used to children and their ways. So if you'll have her I'll go and ask Maria to let her come."

"You are very, very kind, mam'selle. I can never thank you enough, but—I fear to trespass on your good nature, your pity."

"That won't matter. Only say you'll have her to put him to bed, and I'll go and fetch her," declared Miss Gill, glancing further down the beach, where Mrs. Mullens' comfortable proportions were to be seen in close proximity to several juvenile members of the Pritchard brood.

Svende still hesitated, when, little Sigvald looking up, yawned, and said, "I'm tired, Munde. I want my tea and to go to bed," and that settled the question.

"If I may trespass on your kindness then, mam'selle, to so great an extent, I should be deeply grateful to have a reliable person to attend to my brother. I do not know what to do with him in such a sudden emergency. He is not like a strong, healthy child that can be handled by anyone."

"I'm off to fetch Mullens," announced Elizabeth, tearing away as fast as she could go.

"Mam'selle has a good heart!" exclaimed Svende, gratefully.

"Yes," assented Alice, not knowing what else to say, and with a slight bow she was moving away, when the child's piping treble tones arrested her movements.

"Do bring your dog for me to play with to-morrow?" he entreated, with a wistful, upward glance of the eyes, as blue as the Atlantic's waters. "I did joy it so. It was very nice having him to play with. Do promise?"

"Yes. He shall come to play with you," she said, smiling down at him, "and I'll put a collar of flowers on him, shall I?" she went on, forgetting all about the big brother in her interest for the little one, and bending over him.

"Yes, please, and"—with a quaint glance at her—"I should like to kiss you. You make me think of mother. May I?"

"Yes, dear," she said, very gently, kneeling down and kissing his pale forehead twice. "Good-bye till to-morrow. The Shah shall come to you as soon as you come out."

"Oh, thank you very much. I'll be sure to put some bigtinks and sugar in my pocket for him!"

"Yes, do," and with a wave of the hand she went away.

"What a dear lady," said the child in his native tongue to his brother, "and what a dear dog!"

"Yes, she is very sweet," replied Svende, a smile absent, for his eyes were fixed angrily on Favrier, who was approaching from the hotel with an unsteady step that suggested the supposition that he had taken more than was good for him.

When he reached the brothers Sigismunde spoke to him in French in a short, sharp, decisive way, and the man slunk off like a beaten hound to gather his possessions and depart; and Svende stood still, talking to the child with apparent cheerfulness, only wondering what on earth he should do if the strange young lady did not bring her nurse to the rescue.

However, before long he saw her returning with a stout, respectable-looking woman, whose ugly, honest face inspired confidence;

and after a brief introduction, with the help of one of the waiters from the Caravanseri, little Sigvald was carried into the hotel, and presently was safely tucked away between the blankets, sleeping peacefully.

Nurse Mullens had returned to her rightful chicks, and discoursed loudly of the Swedish gentleman's kindness and generosity, and showed the gold piece he had bestowed on her, along with many courteous thanks.

Elizabeth listened to it all with widely-open eyes, and thought at last the fairy prince of whom she had so often dreamed had come into her life, and that the rest of her existence would be full of the rose coloured glamour of romance.

Poor Elizabeth! Alas for the fatality of human dreams and human ambitions!

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning Mrs. Anson, who was getting much stronger and benefiting by the change of air, and Alice strolled down at an early hour to the beach, followed by the collier, for whom Alice had woven a chaplet of flowers, plucked from the cottage garden.

They had not long been settled in a sunny spot when they saw Svende coming towards them, carrying his brother in his strong arms, followed by a waiter with an armful of cushions and rugs.

"Put me down by the lady," ordered the little fellow authoritatively; and accordingly the cushions were arranged by Alice's side, while Sigismunde half hesitatingly bowed, and then held out his hand to Alice, who put hers in it, and then murmured, "my mother."

"Sigvald has quite made up his mind to pass the morning playing with your dog," said Svende, apologetically, as he bowed low to Mrs. Anson. "I hope you do not mind—that he will not be in your way?"

"We do not in the least mind," said Alice, quickly, bending over the boy, who held up his delicate face to be kissed. "We are only glad that the dog amuses him. See what a beautiful crown I have made him!" she went on, holding the flowers out for Sigvald to take. "You will put them on?"

"Oh, yes, they are very pretty. Come here, Shah, and have your crown on. Here is something for you," pulling some dainty biscuits out of a bag, and obediently the great dog went and lay down beside him, allowing the flowers to be put on his head in consideration of the dainties he knew he would get. And Alice made him play all sorts of tricks; and when Sigvald tired of that told him stories about mermaids, and flying fish, and coral reefs, and other wonders of the deep.

"My brother is a spoiled boy," murmured Svende to Mrs. Anson, as he took a seat on a cushion beside her. "I must apologise for this intrusion on your privacy. But he insisted on coming, and I fear to cross his wishes in his delicate state of health."

"There is no reason why you should," rejoined Mrs. Anson, cordially. "We shall be pleased to have him with us. My daughter is so fond of children."

"I thought so," said Svende, directing an admiring glance at her unconscious head. "Children generally know those who are fond of them, and likely to be kind to them. I assure you Sigvald has done nothing but talk about Miss—"

"Anson," put in the widow, as he hesitated significantly.

"About Miss Anson all the morning. His disappointment would have been most bitter had I forbidden him to come to you," he added, apologetically, with a due regard to British insular prejudice.

"I am glad you did not forbid him. Alice is as much delighted with him as he is with her and the dog," declared Mrs. Anson, who was exerting herself to be agreeable to this

handsome, elegant foreigner, whose voice and manners were so refined and pleasant.

"Alice Anson. What a pretty name!" thought the Swede. "It suits her lovely face." Aloud he made some commonplace remark.

"What is the matter with your brother?" inquired the widow, after a little desultory conversation. "I hope nothing incurable."

"I hope and pray not. He was strong and sturdy until he was six years' old, then he got scarlet fever, and my mother falling ill at the same time he was not properly nursed, and it has left a spinal weakness. The doctors ordered him here to England, to Hurstcombe, so I brought him, for he is the only relative I have in the world, and very precious to me indeed."

"He must be. Your mother then—"

"My dear mother died before he was out of danger," replied the young man with unconcealed emotion. "It was a heavy blow. She was so much to us, and it left the child with no one to look after him save myself. A man is naturally awkward with a young child even if strong and healthy, but when delicate as Sigvald is, it is almost beyond his powers."

"It must be," agreed Mrs. Anson, "and is he over six?"

"He was eight last month."

"Really! I should have guessed his age at four at most."

"Yes. He does not look more. He has not grown at all since his illness; in fact, it seems to me that he shrinks, withers daily," said Sigismunde, a melancholy look breaking over his face.

"Perhaps this fine air will work a change. You know, the doctors say there is nothing like Kent air for invalids."

"I trust it may. Yet I begin to despair. He wants a mother's care, Madame Anson. There are so many things a woman could do for him that a man cannot. See how happy and bright he looks with Mam'selle, your daughter. She has amused, cheered, engrossed him as I could never hope to."

"It is woman's province and privilege," remarked Mrs. Anson, quietly.

"And one they do not all enjoy," rejoined the Swede.

"My daughter does thoroughly. She loves children."

"She seems to."

"Munde," cried the boy at that moment, with all the coolness of a spoiled invalid, "I am going to have tea with Miss Anson to-day. It will be very nice. She says there are a set of baby tea-things at her cottage, and I want to see them very much. You'll let me go, won't you?"

"My dear boy, I fear you will be a great trouble to Miss Anson," he objected, looking at the girl's face, with its mobile lips and grave, grey eyes.

"He will not be any trouble at all," she assured him, quickly, lifting the said grey eyes to his entreatingly, "I am so fond of children. I do hope you will let him come to us."

"I will certainly if you wish it," he responded, warmly. "My only fear is that we shall trespass on your kindness."

"You will not do that," she told him with a little soft smile that made her fair face very attractive.

"Then, if you will allow me, I will bring him up myself," he said, looking straight down into the grey orbs upraised to his, feeling determined not to be left out of the invitation so warmly given to his brother, and desiring to see more of this girl with the pale, spirituelle face.

"We shall be very glad to receive you at our little cottage," put in Mrs. Anson, readily, determined not to lose the chance of such a charming acquaintance as this young Swede promised to be.

"I dismissed Javrier last night," he told them apologetically, "so I have no one I should care to trust him with."

"No, of course not."

"We will take great care of him," smiled Alice.

"I am sure you will," he rejoined, cordially. That afternoon little Sigvald was driven over to the cottage by Sigismunde, and enjoyed himself greatly in the quaint garden, and afterwards at tea, when he had the curious Japanese tea-set spread out before him, as he lay on a couch drawn up by the table, with Shah on a chair beside him as guest, and Alice ready to cut him slices of cake or wafers of bread-and-butter. Indeed, it was late before his brother could induce him to leave, for he found out that Alice could sing; and as there was a piano there he made her sing song after song until Sigismunde, who feared she would be tired, insisted on his entering the pony carriage that had been waiting a considerable time, and being driven to the hotel, where Mullens was again in attendance to undress and put him to bed.

After that not a day passed without Sigvald seeing Alice. He was mad about her, and tyrannical, like most child-invalids, and as she seemed to like to have him with her, Sigismunde saw no reason why he should object to the intimacy, more especially as he enjoyed her society quite as much as the child did, and found that they were both very welcome at the cottage.

Hardly a day passed that Sigvald's long perambulator was not seen before the green-latticed porch, and the child seldom went alone. On some pretext or other Sigismunde invariably accompanied him. Sometimes his excuse was to bring a basket full of choice hot-house flowers, anon some early strawberries or a pine, or a bundle of new books and music.

Then he arranged delightfully enjoyable excursions to neighbouring spots of beauty or renown, took them drives, or rowed them about; and when Sigvald was tucked away, sleeping soundly, he took Mrs. Anson, and Alice and Elizabeth, to the pier theatre, while Mullens mounted guard over the invalid, Mrs. Pritchard finding it decidedly advantageous to dispense with the services of her head-nurse now and again, for she and the children never had had so many presents before.

To Alice it was all delightful. The change from dim, grim, grey London, the fresh breezes, the lovely scenery, the pleasant companionship, the little invalid who interested her so greatly; and, moreover, she appreciated the beautiful flowers and things Svende lavished on them. He was rich, evidently, and he spent his money with no niggardly hand, thinking nothing too much if it procured a smile from those perfect lips that were becoming only too dear to him.

The weeks sped away in a pleasant fashion—pleasanter than ever they had been before to her. She did not seek to know why or wherefore; she simply took the happiness that came to her, and was content—for the time being, at any rate, and hardly gave a thought to Tom—honest, loving Tom, who was working away for her in the Far West, and dreaming of the home he hoped to share with her some day. Alice began to realise how far money can go towards making life delightful, and to know that she was living now—that before she had only existed.

"Give me a rose," whispered Sigismunde to her one night. "To-morrow is Sunday. You are so good, you go to church, and I shall not see you until Monday. I want a guerdon!" and the look in the blue eyes sent a thrill through her heart such as she had never experienced before, and that filled her with dreamy delight. She stretched up her hand, and, breaking off a pure white rose, held it to him. He took it, and pressing it to his lips murmured, "A forerunner of better things to come! Adieu, Mam'selle Alice, until Monday."

The rest of that evening seemed to lag to Alice, and Sunday appeared unusually long. She missed the musical, manly tones of Svende's voice, to which her ears had all unconsciously become too much accustomed to during the last few weeks, and the fair, hand-

some face, with its blue eyes, and genial smile. She had hardly known what keen pleasure his society gave her—hardly knew how eagerly she looked for his coming, until now that she was separated from him for a whole day, and realised what a void there was in her life, even for a few hours—hours that she wished would fly, and not crawl with leaden feet.

She took herself to task severely for having allowed her thoughts to be so much occupied by a stranger, and formed no end of good resolutions in regard to him.

But they all vanished when she met him again on Monday; and that evening, when he asked her to take a stroll with him, and watch the play of the moonlight on the waters, she went with him.

They stood on the crest of the cliff looking down on the restless ocean, and neither spoke for a while. Perhaps their feelings were too deep for words. At last Svende turned to her and said,—

"Yesterday was a long day, was it not, ma'mselle?"

"Was it longer than usual?" she replied, a little absently.

"It seemed so to me!" he said, with a ring of passion in his voice, "for I had not you with me, and I missed you—oh, how I missed you! I realised in those few hours how much you have become to me—how dear you are—dearer than anything else on earth, though I thought nothing could be dearer to me than Sigvald. Yet I know now that you are dearer to me, and Alice, I want you to be my wife—my own beloved wife. No; don't speak yet. Don't say anything," he went on quickly, as the girl turned to him with a look of mingled fear and sorrow in her grey eyes. "It seems absurd of me to propose to you after such a short acquaintance, and you know nothing of me. Only I want you so much. You are such a prize to me, and I fear to lose you—to lose what I covet as I have never yet coveted anything on earth. I know I ought to have waited until you were more accustomed to me, only I could not. I love you so. My life has not been a very joyous one," he added, a little break in his musical tones; "but you could make it perfect if you would give me your love. Be mine for always, my very own!"

"Oh, Mr. Svende!" faltered the girl, something very like terror in her voice, "I cannot, I cannot!"

"Take time to reflect, I implore you!" he begged, humbly, taking a cold little hand between both of his. "Do not decide anything now—unless—unless you can say yes to my pleading. I will not ask you to leave England. We will make our home here, and your mother shall live with us. I am rich, very rich. I tell you this, though I don't want to drag monetary affairs into a love that will be as sacred and perfect as ours; but I want you to know that everything can be arranged as you wish if you will but promise to be my wife, to make me happy!"

"It cannot be!" said Alice, in a very low tone. "It is impossible! But believe me, I am very, very sorry. I never dreamt of this!"

"Never dreamt of it! Never dreamt I loved you?"

"No; believe me, I did not!"

"And yet I thought I showed it in every action!"

"No! no!"

"Do you refuse me because I am not an Englishman?" he asked huskily, pressing her hand convulsively.

"No, believe me, no!"

"What is it, then?" he cried, quickly.

"Do I not love you enough? Listen! I have never cared for any other woman! I have never asked another woman to love me! I have never wished to! Only with you all is different! I know what happiness the possession of this little hand would give me!" and he raised it reverently to his lips. "Be my wife, dearest Alice?"

"It is impossible!" she repeated, brokenly, while her face grew deathly in the moonlight,

and the tears gathered in her eyes. "You do me a great honour, but I cannot accept it!"

"Why not?" he urged, passionately. "Have I been a fool? I fancied I was not altogether indifferent to you! Was I presumptive? Did I expect too much?"

"You expect what I cannot give! I cannot, must not, return your love!—it is impossible!"

He held her hands firmly in his, and she looked down at them, a strange sense of unreality on her, and a sort of horror lest, in a weak moment, she should say "Yes" to his pleading, be false to her troth.

She knew that she loved him, now that he had asked her to be his wife, loved him with all the intensity of her nature, as she never could love Tom!

She also knew that his wealth would release her from the grinding, wretched poverty in which she and her mother had lived for so long—only her sense of honour was stronger than everything else.

She had plighted her troth to Tom, and he had said he knew she would be true to him; and, cost what it might, she would be true! She would trample on her own heart, her own desires and wishes, and Tom should never know what the struggle cost her, nor this other one, whom she loved, whose warm, clinging touch she felt on her hands.

There was a long pause, during which both gazed at the silver pathway of light shed by the moon on the rippling waves; and then, in a tone husky with deep emotion, he spoke again.

"If you will not be my wife for my sake, will you for Sigvald's? You know what you are to him—how dearly he loves you!"

Alice trembled, and grew paler, though her courage did not desert her, and she shook her head firmly.

"Is there no hope in the future?" he asked, wildly, seeing the happiness he coveted slipping through his fingers.

"There is no hope!" she replied, mournfully.

"Not even if I wait for years?"

"No! Twenty years hence I could give you no other answer!"

"Alice, will you tell me why?" he asked, earnestly.

"Because," she murmured, thus driven to bay, "I am going to marry my cousin!"

"And you love me?" he cried.

"Do not ask me!" she said, pitifully.

"I will not!" he said, sadly, still firmly. "I have said too much already. Only my great love must plead for me! Come, I will take you home," and together they went up through the fields of young, green corn to the cottage.

At the porch of the little house he stopped, and, taking her hands in his, held them for some minutes in a lingering, tender way; then, releasing them, he turned to go, saying,—

"Good-bye! Heaven keep you!"

And Alice knew that it was "good-bye" for ever, and that never again would she see Sigismunde Svende!

A week later the Ansons returned to town, to the dulness of their Islington lodgings.

Never had the place seemed so utterly wretched before to Alice.

As she looked out at the grey sky and the dirty street, the past seemed a dream—a sweet, illusive dream!

Was it only a fortnight since she had stood with Sigismunde in the flower-filled garden at Hurstcombe? She had been happy then—but now?

Well, she held a letter from Tom in her hand, and it told her that he would be in England before the year was out to claim her for his bride, and inclosed a diamond ring, bidding her wear it for his sake. And she gazed at it as though spellbound, knowing that it was the badge of a bond that would be almost too heavy for her to bear.

[THE END.]

"A HOME for Birds is one of the novelties which an American correspondent reports. A lady in Boston, thinking that many people would like to have their "feathered pets" cared for while they go to Europe or the mountains, has opened a home in which she has had already 150 birds at one time. The price charged for their board varies from one shilling a week for a canary to two shillings for a parrot, and she makes a reduction in the case of several birds occupying the same cage.

EDISON literally works all the time that he is awake. For him to see any mechanical device fail or give annoyance, is enough to set his brain at work devising an improvement upon it; it makes no difference whether it is a patent match that doesn't always light, or a toboggan that lies idle waiting for snow and ice. Returning from Europe last year he noticed that there was a great deal of guess-work and inaccuracy about "taking the sun" in cloudy weather. Before he left the ship he invented a means to take the sun, though it should be obscured by the densest fog imaginable.

A POLICEMAN'S admiration for a shapely arm led to the discovery of a trick in Paris, when a female debtor's goods were about to be seized upon a judgment. When the officers arrived at the house, the unfortunate debtor was discovered apparently dead, and prepared for the grave. Respect for the dead induced them to defer the seizure, and the men were about to retire, when one of them could not resist the desire to admiringly pinch the woman's plump arm. The officer was astounded to see the supposed corpse quickly arise from the bier, and was quite bewildered when he felt a violent blow from her muscular arm felt between the eyes. Indignation at the insult made her forget that she was dead. A prompt seizure of the goods followed the exposure of the ruse.

A DISTINGUISHED children's doctor believes, from his practice, that infants generally, whether brought up at the breast or artificially, are not supplied with sufficient water, the fluid portion of their food being quickly taken up and leaving the solid too thick to be easily digested. In warm, dry weather, healthy babies will take water every hour with advantage, and their frequent fretfulness and rise of temperature are often directly due to their not having it. A free supply of water and restricting the frequency of nursing have been found at the nursery to be a most effectual check in cases of incipient fever, a diminished rate of mortality and marked reduction in the number of gastric and intestinal complaints being attributed to this cause. In teeth cutting, water soothes the gums, and frequently stops the fretting and restlessness universal in children at this period.

A POPULAR physician was recently called on by a friend, to whom, in the course of conversation, he said: "There are ten simple precautions which form an excellent rule of life, and if people would but observe them I should have to resort to some other means of making a livelihood." Then he enumerated the following: Don't read in street cars or other jolting vehicles. Don't pick the teeth with pins or other hard substances. Don't neglect any opportunity to insure a variety of food. Don't eat or drink hot and cold things immediately in succession. Don't pamper the appetite with such variety of food that may lead to excess. Don't read, write or do any delicate work unless receiving the light from the left side. Don't direct special mental or physical energies to more than eight hours' work in each day. Don't keep the parlour dark if you value you own and your children's health. Don't delude yourself into the belief that you are an exception so far as sleep is concerned; the nominal average of sleep is eight hours. Don't endeavour to rest the mind by absolute inactivity; let it rest in work in other channels, and thus rest the tired part of the brain.

FACETIE.

ALL men are bores, except when we want them.

THE man who doesn't know where his next shilling is to come from always sends it where his last went.

FATHER: "Children, this is your new mamma." TOMMY: "Are you going to beat her, too?"

ALL the evidence thus far presented indicates that a spring chicken is a hen in its second childhood.

WHEN a man gets down, there is a rush of men and women to help him up; but when a woman gets down there is a rush of men and women to kick her further down the hill.

THERE probably never was an old bachelor who did not think that some woman somewhere in the world was missing a mighty good thing.

WHEN you see a woman who struggles to keep up appearances you do not have to look far to find a man who is struggling to keep down expenses.

ONE of the Greek writers declared that "hunger makes everything sweet." Probably there were no lemons, green apples or pickles in those days.

"I FEEL sick at heart," said the rejected lover, as he leaned upon the railing of the steamer. "I'm with you," remarked a fellow-passenger; "only mine is farther down."

MRS. PRIM: "John, we must discharge that new music teacher!" MR. PRIM: "Why so, Maria?" MRS. PRIM: "I heard our girls say he has a delightful touch."

WIFE: "What does it mean in this paper when it says that the young German Emperor expects a call to arms?" HUSBAND: "A call to arms! I suppose it means he expects his wife to say, 'Wilhelm, take the baby!'"

HYMAN: "Miss Lennox is not a very handsome girl, but I can tell you she looked killing, for once, at the ball last night." OSWALD: "Did she?" "Yes; you should have seen the look she gave me when I trod upon her train."

LADY: "Your references are all right, and if your cooking is really good I'll hire you." COOK: "If yes have any doubts about me cookin' ask Parloeman Dooliban, who was on the boat where I lived wid my last family."

"It's very puzzling," said a worried-looking woman to one of her neighbours. "What is that?" "I can't tell whether Willie is corrupting the parrot or whether the parrot is corrupting Willie."

A LADY is being examined in a police court. MAGISTRATE: "Well, madam, one thing at least seems to be certain; your husband beat you." WITNESS (apologetically): "Yes, your honour; but then he always was such an energetic man."

DUDE: "She is a pretty girl, and she is rich. Now the question is, has she got good sense?" CANDID CHUM: "You can find that out very easy. Ask her to marry you, and if she accepts, then you can safely put her down as a fool."

MOTHER: "You are a great big girl, Fanny, but you are afraid to sleep alone, and there is your little sister Jenny, who is not half your age, and she is not afraid." FANNY: "You see, ma, she isn't old enough to have any sense yet."

TWO Paris loafers are reading a notice: "Lost, a black poodle; one hundred francs reward." One of them says to the other: "You must take the one you stole yesterday." "But it is white." "You must say that it has turned white through grief."

"No," said the man whose turn was next. "I don't believe there's a look in horses' eyes, except sometimes. I know a fellow who found one, and his wife left him the next day; but I might stumble over a whole shopful and it wouldn't do me any good."

THE ancient Egyptians honoured a cat when dead. They knew when a cat most deserved it.

"WILLIE," said a lawyer to his son, "did I hear you swearing this afternoon?" "No, father. I may have been affirming with unnecessary emphasis, but I wasn't swearing?"

ROGER THORNDYKE (coming home at eleven p. m.): "Tell Mrs. Thorndyke that I am here, Marie." SERVANT: "I am very sorry to say, sir, that Mrs. Thorndyke has just put her beefsteak mask on for the night and cannot be disturbed."

"Do you reside in this city?" asked a masked man of a masked lady at a masked party the other evening. He felt sick when she said to him, in a low voice, "Don't be a fool, John; I know you by the wart on your thumb." It was his wife.

"WHAT do you want?" asked the lady of the house sharply, as she opened the door in response to a ring. "I'm a taxidermist, madam, and I called to—" "Well, we pay our taxes when they're due and no sooner, so you can skip!" and the door was banged like the forehead of a girl fresh from school.

A GENTLEMAN went to keep a written appointment with a broker whom he did not know by sight. Seeing a forlorn-looking gentleman seated in the office, he said: "I beg pardon, sir, are you the broker?" To which the other promptly replied: "No sir, I'm the fellow that got broke!"

A SERIOUS DEFECT—Artist (to agriculturist): "Possibly your knowledge of art is a trifle limited?" Agriculturist: "Mebby; but I know suthin' 'bout cows." Artist: "Isn't the cow well drawn?" Agriculturist: "Dawed good 'nough, but b'gosh, she ain't chewin' her cud."

A TEUTON, who is nothing if not athletic, recently took part in some sports organized by a German gymnasium. He competed in two races, the second of which he won. He thus briefly and epigrammatically shows up his performance: "I vos first at last if I vos behind before!"

MRS. AVNOO: "Bridget, the parlour windows are so dirty I can't see through them." BRIDGET: "Well, mum, I only jist came from the front door, and beyant the faces of Miss Fashion and her young man in the bay windy opposite, thur's nothin' across the way wort lookin' at."

"MA, I've an idea that some of the folks in this graveyard haven't gone to heaven." "You don't say! What makes you think they haven't?" "Because I read it on the tombstones." "No!" "Yes, I did, though. It was carved on ever so many, 'Peace to his ashes.' Now, there ain't any ashes 'cept where it's very hot, is there, ma?"

BROWN (reading a newspaper): "The Japanese have one very peculiar custom." MRS. BROWN: "What is that?" "They invariably take off their shoes on entering a house." "Yes, the custom is rather peculiar, inasmuch as it is practised at all hours instead of at night only." "Up to the time of our going to press Brown has made no reply."

COLLECTOR: "Mr. Hardup in?" MRS. HARDUP: "No; he's out collecting." C.: "That's what you told me the last time I was here." MRS. H.: "Yes." C.: "And the time before that." MRS. H.: "Yes." C. (sarcastically): "He don't seem to have much success." MRS. H. (as she slams the door in his face): "Seems to have as much success as you have."

"WELL, mum, I must be ather lavin' ye," announced the cook. "What do you mean? Why are you going?" asked her astonished mistress. "I am going to be married next week," was the reply. "But surely, Bridget, you will not leave me so suddenly. You must ask him to wait for you a few days." "Oh, I couldn't, mum." "Why not, pray?" "Sure, mum, I'd like to oblige you, but I don't feel well enough acquainted with him to ask such a thing."

A FEW Sundays since a teacher in a Sunday-school of an Episcopal church said to one of her pupils: "James, what good thing—what great thing are you willing to give up as a sacrifice during the Lenten season?" James meditated about ten seconds and responded: "I think I'll give up going to Sunday-school."

FARMER'S WIFE: "Who is that horrible-looking man at the gate?" TRAMP: "That's a friend of mine, mum." FARMER'S WIFE: "Well, he's the worst-looking thing I've seen in seventeen years." TRAMP: "He ain't very pretty, mum, I'll admit, but between you and me he stands very high in our profession."

IMPUDENT COLLECTOR: "Lookes here, Mrs. Brown, I'm getting tired of coming after this money. I'll proceed to serious measures if—Mrs. Brown (indignantly): "Leave the house, sir!" Collector (retreating): "Certainly! I don't want the house; it's the amount of the bill I am after."

"THERE is one solace left to me at least," remarked the old farmer. "After all my boys leave and go up to the city, after the pigs and cattle die, and everything else forswakes me, there is at least one thing that will stick to the old farm." "And that is—?" "The mortgage!"

A MAN saw a ghost while walking along a lonely highway at midnight. The ghost stood exactly in the middle of the road, and the wayfarer, deciding to investigate, poked at it with his umbrella. The next instant he was knocked twenty feet into a mud-hole. Moral: "Never poke an umbrella at a large white mule when its back is turned."

A CERTAIN Young Men's Christian Association recently invited a gentleman to deliver an address. He did so, and flattered himself that he made a good impression on the audience, but was somewhat taken aback when the chairman at the close of his address gave out the hymn, "Art thou weary, art thou languid, art thou sore oppressed?"

EXCITED MESSENGER: "Mrs. Sawbones, come quick! A man has fallen from the roof of his house and is bleeding to death." "All right. I'll be there as soon as I've got on my new dress and have done up my hair. Let me see; hadn't I better wear my dark blue dress, or that light violet-coloured one? The blue dress is more becoming to my complexion; but the other is so stylish."

JOHN: "A queer thing happened in New York the other day. A horse stole three pies from a baker's wagon and ate them." SMITH: "I should have liked to have seen that baker. He must have been astonished." "Astonished? He was mad. He nearly went crazy about it." "About what: the pies?" "No: the horse. It was a valuable animal and the only one he had."

NURSE (bearing a bundle of lace, &c.): "There, Bobby, here's a dear little brother, just come from Heaven." BOBBY (aged five): "That ain't my brother, Nurse; I ain't got one, you know; he must belong next door." Nurse: "No, no, dear; he is your brother; come and give him a kiss." BOBBIE (doubtfully): "What's his name?" Nurse: "Oh, he hasn't a name yet." BOBBIE (triumphantly): "Then you're a story, and he can't be my brother. Our name is Smith; you know, and if he were my brother his name would be Smith, too, wouldn't it?"

MRS. SMALLPURSE: "The doctor says I must get out of the city this summer. Now, I was just thinking that perhaps a cottage at the sea-side might—" MR. SMALLPURSE: "Your aunt and uncle at Mount Tiptop are very anxious to have you visit their lumber camp, you know." MRS. S.: "But that is in the mountains. The doctor says I must be on the water." MR. S.: "Um! Well, I think that can be managed. I know a very nice old couple who might be willing to take a boarder at a price within my means." MRS. S.: "That's splendid! Do they live on the water?" MR. S.: "Yes, indeed; all summer long. They run a canal boat."

SOCIETY.

THE Prince of Wales shows his appreciation of Italian opera by being present almost every night.

In spite of the length of time during which tea-gowns have been in favour, they seem at the present moment to be more fashionable than ever.

THE tailor-made dress is the survival of the best ideas of the last half of the nineteenth century. It is neat, solid, compact, useful, convenient, and adaptable. It stands for service and the absence of superfluity, for readiness in an emergency, and propriety everywhere.

BALMORAL never looked more beautiful than when bathed in the glorious sunshine which welcomed the return of the Queen and lit up the statues of Scotch heroes and the rooms hung with many coloured tartans. Her Majesty was in excellent spirits at her birthday lunch, and since her arrival in Scotland her health has undergone a marvellous change for the better.

THE Czar of Russia wears the largest ruby in the world, valued at one hundred thousand dollars, in his crown, which is mitre-shaped, and has on its crest a cross composed of five big diamonds supporting the ruby.

THE four-year-old King of Spain now dispenses with nurses at his official receptions. He recognises that at four years a monarch must be dignified. He sits on the throne by the side of his affectionate mother, and tries to look pleased with the gorgeously-dressed nobles, soldiers, statesmen, and diplomats who defer before him to pay their respects. He has grown a great deal lately.

THE history of Herr Sigg, who died recently at Zurich, was a curious one. He began life as an acrobat, and while at Bangkok so astonished the King of Siam with his dexterity that he was named somersault-turner in ordinary to his Majesty. He rose to be Lord High Chamberlain, and a millionaire. He has bequeathed the whole of his wealth to his native town.

It seems that orchids are the ruling flowers of this season, but a common flower, the iris (or flag, as we used to call it, when we found it growing wild), is holding its own wonderfully, both in blue and yellow varieties.

EMPEROR EUGENIE used to "make up" excessively during the last years of her royalty, powder, paint, hair dye and khol-pencilling for the eyes being extensively used by her to conceal the ravages made by time on her once incomparable beauty. Now, by returning to simple naturalness, she has regained a goodly portion of her charms. The empress is now sixty-three years of age, and is a lovely old lady after having been a radiantly beautiful young one.

A NEW Dress Reform League is in prospect, the object of which is not to involve any departure from the recognised conventional modes, but to suggest the abolition of useless and unhealthy garments, especially in the case of growing girls. The new league will thus have a much more sympathetic claim upon public attention than the extravagant associations which demand the sacrifice of all beauty to hygienic principles.

DESPITE rumours to the contrary, it is quite on the cards that before long the Prince of Wales may leave Marlborough House. The Queen, it is said, has offered Kensington Palace to him, and he will find there more ample accommodation than Marlborough House affords. It was, as of course our readers know, in Kensington Palace that the Queen was born. Should the Prince accept the offer made him of Kensington Palace the *train de maison* of His Royal Highness would at once become more imposing and splendid, indeed, semi-regal; and the private gentleman style of living which he has enjoyed at Marlborough House be abandoned.

STATISTICS.

THE General Post Office expects to spend £1,278,900 on the carriage of mails during the present year.

THE regular forces of the British army number 210,218, and of this strength one-half is stationed in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

IN 1828 there were about 25,000 looms in East London, giving employment to about 60,000 persons in different branches of the trade—as throwsters, dyers, winders, warpers, pickers, twistors, weavers, dressers, &c.—but at the present time there are only about 1,000 people employed.

HOW small the population of Western Australia is can only be realised by reflecting that it is less than that of the Isle of Man, less than that of the Channel Islands, less than that of any English county except Rutland, or about the same as the population of the single towns of Cambridge, Oxford, or Maidstone. Thirty-nine thousand of these colonists live in the south-west corner of the continent, inhabiting an area of 67,000 square miles, or nearly 9,000 square miles more than the area of England and Wales.

GEMS.

AFFECTATIONS in any part of our carriage is lighting up a candle to our defects, and never fails to make us take notice of, either as wanting sense or sincerity.

A MAN has many selves. He has a past self, a dead self, a blessed self, a mean, sneaking, infamous, detestable self, and sometimes a heroic and majestic self.

THE character is like white paper—if once blotted, it can hardly ever be made to appear as white as before. One wrong step often stains the character for life.

TRUTH is infinite, and we cannot clasp it in our finite arms; yet we may live in its light, and learn more and more of its grand meaning, if we but sincerely, honestly and patiently tread the straight road of intellectual virtue.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

IF one rubs the hands, after peeling onions, on a stick of celery, the smell of the onion will be entirely removed.

RHUBARB PIE.—Peel the rhubarb, cut in small pieces, wash in cold water. To one quart add a cup of sugar and half a cup of water. Put in a porcelain or enameled kettle, cover closely, and cook slowly on the back of the stove or in the oven three to four hours, or until quite soft and a rich dark colour. Bake without a top crust, but put bars of paste across the pie.

DELICIOUS little cakes, called bachelor's buttons, are prepared by rubbing two ounces of butter into five ounces of flour; then add five ounces of white sugar; beat an egg with half the sugar and put into the other ingredients; add almond flavouring according to taste; roll little cakes in the hand, the size of a large nut, sprinkle them with broken lump sugar, and place them on tins with buttered paper. They should be lightly baked.

STRAWBERRY SHORT CAKE.—One quart of flour, three heaping teaspoonfuls of baking powder, one half teaspoonful of salt, sifted together; add one-half or two-thirds of a cup of cold butter. Chop the butter into the flour until it is fine like meal. Add sweet milk slowly, mixing with a knife until the dough is just right to roll out. Roll rather thin, and fit into Washington pie tins. Bake a light brown. When done split with a warm knife, butter each half lightly, spread the strawberries mashed and sweetened on the under side, cover, and sift sugar over the top.

MISCELLANEOUS.

IN 1616 there were only three hundred and fifty English people in all North America.

QUEEN VICTORIA'S yearly doctor's bill is eight hundred pounds.

THE nasturtium is found wild in Peru. It was introduced into Europe in 1571.

FRENCH army and navy surgeons have been forbidden to practice hypnotism on their patients.

It is said that the onion is a great sleep inducer, and about equal to quinine for malaria.

It is only one person among a thousand who becomes a centenarian, and hardly six persons among a thousand who attain seventy-five years of age.

To the city of Liverpool must be awarded the somewhat doubtful distinction of having the biggest workhouse in the world. The huge institution has ample accommodation for five thousand inmates.

THE largest tree in the world, according to statistics lately published by the Italian government, is a chestnut standing at the foot of Mount Aenna. The circumference of the main trunk at sixty feet from the ground is 212 feet.

A DOCTOR at Toulouse informs the French Academy of Medicine that he has discovered a cure for croup. It is a very simple one—a teaspoonful of flour of sulphur in a tumbler of water. After three days of the treatment his patients recovered.

ACCORDING to a foreign contemporary, the Pope finds his chief relaxation in writing Latin verses. He is a consummate classical scholar, and in his earlier days edited and annotated an edition of Virgil's *Georgics*, now much used in the schools of the Peninsula.

FRESH cold water is a powerful absorbent of gases. A bowl of water placed under the bed of the sick-room and frequently changed is among the valuable aids in purifying the air. The room in which the London aldermen sit is purified by open vessels of water placed in different parts of the room. It can be easily inferred from this that water standing for any length of time in a close room is unfit for drinking. Experiments of this kind are not costly. It has frequently been observed that restless and troubled sleep has been corrected by placing an open vessel of water near the head of the bed.

TRAVELLERS who have dined in all parts of the world say they have been best served where Japanese are employed as waiters. It is stated that the Japanese, when properly trained, make better waiters than any other race. They are clean, quick, courteous, honest, intelligent, have good memories, and serve faithfully and well. To speak the English language is an accomplishment becoming very common in Japan, and it may not be long before the young Jap, with his native born talents and his stock of English words, will seek America and find a welcome and the reward which those who make themselves truly useful nearly always receive in that country.

DARWIN estimated that worms, by swallowing earth for the sake of the vegetable matter it contains and forming castings, bring to the earth as much as ten tons of earth per annum on an acre. Worms are great promoters of vegetation by boring, perforating, and loosening the soil, and rendering it pervious to rains, and the fibres of plants, by drawing straws and stalks of leaves and twigs into it, and most of all, by throwing up such infinite numbers of lumps of earth called worm casts, which form a fine manure for grain and grass. The earth without worms would soon become cold, hardbound, void of fermentation, and consequently sterile; this has occurred in many places where the worms have been either accidentally or intentionally destroyed, and the fertility of the soil thus lost has only been restored when the worms had been collected again and resumed their fertilising work.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LONDONER.—Eresham is commonly pronounced as if spelt "Eesham."

TOPSY.—Lead is very often injurious to the general health when applied as a so-called hair restorer.

IN A FIX.—Bear stains readily yield to soapy water, afterwards rinsed out in clear warm water.

WIFAY.—The Married Woman's Property Act came into force on January 1, 1883.

CONNIE.—Consult, without delay, a regular physician who can give you his personal attention.

H. F.—You may, without a license, use a gun on your own premises to shoot vermin or to scare birds; but for no other purpose.

THE NEEDLES.—Apply to the Agent-General in London for the Government of New South Wales, Sir Saul Samuel, 9, Victoria-street, Westminster.

FUND OF IT.—It is stated that the first mention of coffee in the English statute books occurs in 1660, when a duty of fourpence was laid upon every gallon made and sold.

C. B.—1. The Patent Office is at 25, Southampton-buildings, W.C. 2. You can obtain all particulars as to procedure on application. 3. Yes, but we do not know the method.

JUSTICE.—You should, if possible, give a fortnight's notice of your intention to sell. If you cannot give notice you ought to wait for a reasonable time—say three months.

DATES.—The Princess Alice sank in the Thames on September 3, 1878. No complete list of the passengers was ever published or ascertained. You should search the file of the *Times* of that date.

VEKED.—If the lawyer was culpably negligent you are entitled to recover your loss from him, but the fact that a bill of sale is void by no means implies necessarily that it was negligently drawn.

ENGINEER.—Screw propulsion was introduced into the United States in 1845 by the construction of the *Princeton*, a steamship classed as a second-rate ship-of-war. She was built by Captain Ericsson, and was, we believe, the first screw steam war-vessel ever built.

DOUBTING.—Handel first adapted the air of "God save the King" to the words of the English national anthem; but it was originally composed by Lull, and sung to an ode from the pen of the Mother Superior of the Convent of St. Orr, on the occasion of the first visit of Louis XIV.

CONSTANT READER.—The principal street of Berlin is called Unter den Linden (Under the Lindens), from the lindens with which it is lined. The linden is a family of trees which grow in Europe, Asia, and North America. They are also called lime trees, in the north of Europe, but-trees, and in the United States basswood trees.

ELABE.—An easy life has a great deal to do with the complexion; but as for people who fret and grieve, or who get scorched in the sun one day and nipped by the wind the next, or who pucker up their faces and frown without knowing it, all the balms in Arabia cannot keep them in a genuine, un wrinkled state of bloom.

A. F. B.—The phrase John Bull, as applied to an Englishman, is said to have been first used by Arbuthnot in his "Ludicrous History of Europe," erroneously ascribed to Dean Swift. In this satire the French are called Lewis Baboon, the Dutch Nicholas Frog, and the English John Bull.

E. S. P.—Helvoet-Sluis, a fortified seaport town of the Netherlands, was formerly the chief place of departure for English ports. In 1688, William of Orange, with fifty war-ships and 14,000 men, embarked there for England, and it is still a very important naval station with large docks, and an arsenal. The name is pronounced as if spelled hal-voet-sluis, the accent on the last syllable.

ONLY A BOY.—1. James Orlinton, a Scotchman who flourished in the sixteenth century and took the degree of A.M. at the extremely early age of fourteen, was dubbed "the Admirable Orlinton" on account of his precocity and extraordinary mental gifts. The phrase "the Polish Orlinton," probably refers to some Polish student of remarkable capacity, as the name of Orlinton is frequently used in metaphor for a similar purpose. 2. There is no authority for saying that anybody was the original of the margrave in "A Strange Story."

EDDY.—There is not at present any free emigration to Canada or Australia, except Queensland for female domestic servants and unmarried agricultural labourers. In answer to your further question we should say that it would be quite suicidal for a young lad with no trade or special training at his fingers' end to go out on speculation to the States, unless he carries recommendations with him addressed to friends likely to put him in the way of a situation. If he is to struggle into a way of living, it is better he should do so here.

WHITE WING.—1. We are very glad to hear from you again. The improvement in your writing is very marked. 2. There are so many books on both etiquette and cookery that it is difficult to recommend either. They vary in price from sixpence to many shillings, and any bookseller should be able to get them for you. 3. A modest, well-mannered girl is always loved and respected by everybody. 4. A young lady cannot be too careful in her behaviour with gentlemen. It is not prudent to allow such familiarities unless you are actually engaged to him.

VERITAS.—The *Railway and Commercial Gazetteer* would probably give what you want; but for the actual locality of places reference must be made to the county maps.

HOUSEKEEPER.—If a situation is taken for a month on trial either party can terminate the engagement at the end of the month without notice.

HOUSEMAID.—Unless there was an agreement for any other term, the engagement of a domestic servant is terminable by a month's notice given at any time.

TROUBLED.—The landlord cannot (unless you move secretly in order to evade payment) distrain on your present residence for the rent due on account of your former tenancy. He must go to the County Court.

WORRIED JANE.—Beat out all the moth maggots you can, and to save the parts not as yet attacked rub in plentifully powdered camphor and ground pepper, or Keating's powder.

A YOUTH.—1. It may be, and very probably does, dispense with the necessity for a will; but it depends upon its terms. 2. We do not know of any "usual basis."

N. B.—To detect chalk in milk, dilute the milk with water; the chalk, if there be any, will settle to the bottom in an hour or two. Put to the sediment vinegar, and if effervescence take place it is chalk.

DIVA.—High collars to ladies' dresses are rapidly reducing themselves, and even the cold autumnal weather, when it comes, will hardly see them revived in the same dimensions.

A DEAR LITTLE MAID OF TWO.

I'll sing you a song to a nursery tune,
Of a dear little maid of two,
Who has peachen cheeks and rosebud lips,
And eyes of a soft sea-blue;
With charms of a gleam of innocence,
That are ripe at the age of two.

She is not an angel—no, no, no,
And Heaven be praised for that;
She is fairly human from top to toe,
With limbs that are daintily fat,
And where she trots, be it high or low,
There is wealth of surprising chat.

Somebody's heart is strong and brave,
And somebody's love is true;
By day, by night, they are amply tried
By this little maid of two;
But somebody's love would never tire,
Had it ten times more to do.

What reward does somebody get,
Dear dreamer with eyes of blue?
A kiss, a smile, from the regular pet,
A tender caress or two.
Why, each of these is a heaven of bliss,
From a sweet little maid like you.

Come, happy maid, with the sea-bright eyes,
And prattle about my knee;
Then lay that soft, round cheek to mine,
And laugh in innocent glee;
That childish talk and downy touch
Give joy and strength to me.

Then grow, my sweet, as well as you may,
And be, like somebody, true,
For high-born dames of noblest heart
Have been as tiny as you;
And in the maiden of twenty-one
May we find the maid of two!

H. J.

TEMPTED.—Most opium is raised in India, and sent thence to China, where it is used for smoking with or without tobacco. That used in the United States comes chiefly from Smyrna. As a medicine its value lies in quieting the nerves and allaying or mitigating pain. For smoking, the opium is made into an extract, and a small pill of the size of a pea is placed in the pipe, lighted, and exhausted at a single whiff.

FRANK.—The original Black Friday in England was June 8, 1688—the day on which King James sent the seven bishops to the Tower. At the trial on the charge of libel which followed, they were acquitted, but the excitement was without a parallel in English history of that century. A Black Friday occurred in London on May 12, 1866, the *London Times* so denominating the panic on the day named.

JUBA.—It is best to bathe just before going to bed, as any danger of catching cold is thus avoided, and the complexion is improved by keeping warm for several hours after leaving the bath. A couple of pounds of bran put into a thin bag and then in the bath tub is excellent for softening the skin. It should be left to soak in a small quantity of water for several hours before being used.

DORIS.—A pure blonde has a fair skin and complexion, blue eyes, and yellow or light hair. A brunette should have a clear olive skin, dark eyes, and black hair, eyebrows and eyelashes. You, from your incomplete description, seem to be what is termed a blonde-brunette; that is, a woman with a mixture of some of the peculiarities of the blonde and brunette, the peculiarities being largely toned down. The average woman is a blonde-brunette, and has either dark or brown hair, blue or grey eyes, a complexion which lacks the clearness and softness of the perfect blonde, and brows and lashes which are dark, but usually not heavy.

STEWART.—A gardener who lives on the premises is entitled to a month's notice; but he can be dismissed immediately for refusing to obey a proper order.

VIC VERSA.—We do not understand your question; but we have no knowledge of the affair to which it evidently refers.

MARY.—To make suet pudding, take four cupsful of prepared flour, one cupful of raisins, one cupful of milk, one cupful of chopped beef suet, and one cupful of treacle. Boil two hours.

SUFFERER.—You need the services of a physician or surgeon who can give you his personal attention. As you state your case, we do not think any ordinary remedy would prove of permanent benefit.

BIG BOY.—Spanish juice is an alternative name for liquorice, got by the evaporation of the decoction of the roots of the plants of the genus *glycyrrhiza*, order *leguminosae*; common over north-west Europe, originally obtained from Spain.

FRANCIE.—Jewellery of all kinds can be beautifully cleaned by washing in soap suds, in which a few drops of spirits of ammonia are stirred, shaking off the water and laying in a box of dry sawdust to dry. As simple as this sounds, it is the nicest way to clean pins, chains, or any jewellery, as it leaves no marks or scratches.

LAURA.—If the card should contain the letters "R.S.V.P." (an abbreviation for the French *repondez, s'il vous plait*, "please reply"), it is expected that an acknowledgment and answer will be sent. It is not customary, however, to put "R. S. V. P." on wedding invitations.

CAREFUL ANNIE.—Many of the colours in cashmere dresses wash well by making a warm lather of soapy water, washing quickly in that, abstaining from rubbing soap into the fabric, then rinsing thoroughly and quickly in clean water, and drawing the fabric out when drying to prevent shrinkage.

CORA.—A fine potato salad is thus made: Cut four cold boiled potatoes in small pieces. Chop the whites of three hard-boiled eggs, add one small onion chopped fine, and a little parsley. To these add a dressing made of the yolks of the eggs rubbed fine, a teaspoonful of melted butter, and mustard, pepper, salt, and vinegar to taste.

T. G.—Property bought by the wife before the Married Women's Property Act came into operation (1883) is under the control of the husband, unless secured to the wife by settlement. Property coming to or acquired by the wife since the Act came into force belongs exclusively to her. As to the other question, we cannot answer. It must go to a lawyer.

ANXIOUS FATHER.—Nothing can be done except to buy the lad off for £10 if he is willing. The decision of the War Office is not to release any lad under eighteen years if he declares himself to be of that age when he enlists, and looks as old as he says. Mother may write to the commanding officer, stating circumstances, if she likes, but we fear nothing will come of it.

T. TELLETT.—There is no set time within which the receiver must report. The receiver is an officer of the court and must follow the instructions given him by the court, which usually make no provision regarding time. When the affairs which he is in charge of are wound up, or he is removed, or he resigns, he must render his report. Or, if he is too slow in his proceedings, the parties in interest can apply to the court for relief.

SEARCHER.—All historical record and discovery go to prove that the human race radiates from a spot in Central Asia, and the great Assyrian monarchy, which at a subsequent period might be said to dominate the whole known world, including Egypt, was founded there. Not a tithe of evidence exists to prove that the Egyptians populated the world. They reached a high level of civilisation in Africa, but never obtained a foothold either in Asia or Europe.

MAYFLOWER.—Fleet-street is so-called after the Fleet river, which was once an open stream running into the Thames. It has been a noted thoroughfare since the thirteenth century. The name *Hampten* is thought to be derived from the Saxon words "Ham" or home, and "Stede" or place; but there was a "manor of Hamsted" as early as the year 986. It appears to have become a parish in or about the year 1500, and its registers commence from that date. Charing-cross takes its name from the old village of Charing, which stood on the same spot. The cross which formerly stood there was one of the eight crosses erected by Edward the First on the spots where his wife's bier rested on its way to Westminster. This cross was taken down in the year 1647.

THE LONDON READER, Post-free. Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS and VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of all booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 342, Now Ready, price Sixpence, post-free, Eightpence. Also Vol. LIV., bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. R. SPICK; and printed by WOODFALL and KINDER, 70 to 76, Long Acre, W.C.